

PATIENT SAFETY AND PHYSIOTHERAPY; LEARNING FROM PATIENT EXPERIENCE, SIGNPOSTING ROUTES TO QUALITY



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OVERVIEW

The UK NHS treats more than a million patients every 36 hours and sometimes things go wrong. Several UK Government commissioned reviews and reports over recent years emphasised that “safety must be the highest priority for quality patient care”. This is essential for physiotherapy in common with all other healthcare disciplines and services.

The Institute for Healthcare Improvement identified a 13.5% rate of harm within the US Medicare population.



WHAT IS PATIENT SAFETY?

Patient safety strives to prevent mistakes in healthcare that can cause harm. “First do no harm” – is a central aim of healthcare. It is a concern for all healthcare globally. Errors that occur are rarely the fault of individuals, it is often the processes, procedures, conditions, environment, incorrect priorities and constraints that healthcare staff face that challenge patient safety. Our central focus as professionals must be on safe quality assured patient-centred care.



THE ROUTE TO QUALITY



- Government** The overarching role is to ensure the right framework, processes and procedures are in place, that services are fully and equitably funded, regulated and monitored. Ensuring that organisations develop partnership working creating an environment in which a culture of safety in healthcare is encouraged and nurtured from the highest level to ensure success for patients and workforce safety. It is Government’s role to make policy and legislate to build safety into every system ensuring safest, reliable care.
- Regulation** The role of the Regulator is to protect the public. The Regulator keeps a Register of professionals who must meet the standards for their education and training, professional skills, behaviour and health : Sets standards, approves courses, Registers those people that qualify, Holds the Registrants to the standards, The standards incorporate Safe practice and service provision
- Healthcare Organisations** It is the responsibility of all healthcare organisations to develop the vision, lead and facilitate a culture of safety, as well as overview of the strategy development and implementation, leading and managing change, monitoring, ensuring sustainability ensuring that it is a “learning organisation”. By testing ideas, learning and sharing knowledge, skills, expertise and experience improvements can be made.
- Management and Leadership** Build a safety culture; Lead and support your staff; Integrate your risk management activity; Promote reporting; Involve and communicate with patients and the public; Learn and share safety lessons; Implement solutions to prevent harm
- Safe and Effective Staffing** Workforce planning and in particular, safe and effective staffing levels, are one of the biggest challenges in healthcare today. A crucial role for physiotherapy leaders is to establish safe effective staffing levels skill mix and expertise, based on understanding of needs, supply and demand, clinical acuity and resources
- Education and Training** It is essential that appropriate safety education and training is in place at all levels throughout the service. Practical “tools”, strategies, skills and expertise are essential
- Measurement** Measurement is crucial in all areas of management, leadership healthcare provision including safety and patient experience: Measure and Manage.
- Environment** The environment including buildings, facilities, equipment, furniture etc. But it must be safe. Regular recorded inspections and checks must be in place and appropriate remedial action taken whenever necessary.
- Technology** Technology is fast, efficient and rapidly developing, it may reduce errors, but it is not a safety net. The many advances in technology is an enormous advantage but it sometimes makes people complacent, introduces new errors and obstructs face-to-face interactions. Remember that technology can have both positive and negative impacts.

Learn from Patient Experience

An important goal must be partnerships between healthcare service providers, patients, families and carers, in which the values, needs and preferences are respected. Evidence shows positive association between patient experience, patient safety and clinical effectiveness. It shows positive associations between patient experience and self-rated and objectively measured health outcomes; adherence to recommended clinical practice and medication. Patient experience measures are robust indicators of healthcare quality, services with low patient experience scores, for example, have higher re-admission and mortality rates. Good communication influences emotional health, symptom resolution and reported pain and effective self-management of long term conditions.

Look Beyond Patients As Just Consumers of Services The most beneficial approach is working with patients in partnership: patients are “experts” through their own lived experience –a rich source of insight, ideas and strategies for improvement, innovation and design. Develop a Patient Participation Strategy , build genuine patient involvement and prioritise patient safety.

References

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