

This doctoral dissertation is a collection of scientific publications on the culture of patient safety in the context of access to health information. Considering the wide scope and complexity of the issue of safety in the Polish health care system, this work presents one of its elements, which is patient access to health information. The presented research project consists of several stages aimed at the widest possible understanding of this problem, taking into account both communication with medical personnel and searching for information in non-professional sources.

Various research methods were used in the project. They included: a terminological analysis of concepts related to patient safety, an analysis of jurisprudence, an analysis of literature using databases such as Scopus and PubMed, using the following keywords: patient safety, patient information, sources of health information; as well as surveys and analyses of the comprehensibility of prepared informed consent forms.

The first stage of the research work concerned the analysis of factors that may affect the fact that despite the introduction of numerous changes, the level of patient safety is still not at a satisfactory level. The conclusions from the first stage of the research indicate that the process of changes in the scope of increasing the level of safety is quite slow, but it is heading in the right direction. In addition to legislative work, there are much needed grassroots initiatives to improve safety and quality in health care.

The conclusions from the first stage of the research project became the starting point for another publication, the aim of which was to search for effective and modern methods of educating future medical staff in the field of patient safety. Due to the extensive area of issues that must be learned by students during their studies in medicine, introducing the issue of patient safety in the form of a separate subject is not always possible. A solution to this may be the introduction of the issues of safety and quality in health care within the already existing subjects. Education of medical personnel regarding patient safety should aim at making future and current employees of the health care system aware that by sharing their knowledge with patients, they have a real impact on increasing the level of their safety.

The third stage of the work included a detailed analysis of the content of legal acts of the European Union in the field of patient safety, taking into account acts summarizing the degree of implementation of individual recommendations of EU authorities in this area. The existing extensive legislative acquis of the Community covers the issue of patient safety in many of its aspects, but in order to achieve the goals set therein, a number of legislative actions at the national level and the empowerment of competent authorities are required.

The next stage of the project was the preparation of an informed consent form that would be understandable for the patient. The implementation of this goal consisted of a study comprising three phases. In the first one, a team of lawyers developed a form that meets the requirements of the jurisprudence and doctrine of medical law. In the next phase, the form was subjected to a linguistic analysis using an application assessing the readability of the text for people with different levels of education (“Jasnopis”). After obtaining a result that indicated the form is very hard to read, the necessary modifications were made so that when re-assessed by the application the text was easy. In the third phase, a study with adult volunteers was conducted to make a subjective assessment of the difficulty of the text of the informed consent form after linguistic modifications. Thanks to the appropriate procedure of preparing a standardized form, people undergoing treatment would have a better understanding of the goals and significance of the proposed treatment. As a result, it would allow the number of consents signed by patients unaware of the meaning of the text read to be significantly reduced.

The last and the most extensive part of the research project was aimed at analysing the access of Polish patients to health information. The study used a survey with a custom-made questionnaire form that allowed answers to be obtained to questions about the sources of health information chosen by patients, the reasons for seeking it and the degree of satisfaction with the obtained information. The analysis of the survey results showed that access to health information is a universal need, regardless of gender, age or education. Health information obtained from a doctor is the most desirable (97.71%). The Internet (indicated by 94.82% of online respondents and 81.82% of offline respondents) may be a tool to support building a safety culture, along with other media, provided that the content posted there is created with the participation of healthcare professionals.