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The Quality of Perioperative Care: Developing a Patient-Oriented Measurement Tool

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was, first, to describe the quality of perioperative care as evaluated by patients and perioperative nurses; and second, to develop a measurement tool that patients can use when assessing their perioperative care. The study was divided into two main phases, viz. the Preliminary and Primary Phases, while work to develop the measurement tool (modified from the "Good Nursing Care Scale") cut across the whole research process. In addition the summary contains previously unpublished material.

In the Preliminary Phase, 97 articles concerning patients' surgical care were analysed in a traditional narrative literature review. The empirical data were collected (1993) by a self-administered questionnaire in two stages from amongst surgical patients at one university hospital. In the first stage the patients (n=246, response rate 82%) filled in the questionnaire in hospital, in the second stage at their (n=158, response rate 76%) homes. In the Primary Phase (1998) the data were collected using a modified questionnaire at five operating departments. The sample comprised 1200 surgical patients and all (n=189) perioperative nurses; 874 patients (response rate 73%) and 143 nurses (response rate 76%) took part. The data were analysed using statistical methods and content analysis.

In the Preliminary Phase the literature review showed that there is comparatively little research on nursing in operating departments. The empirical study indicated that patients are capable of evaluating the care they have received in the operating department and that they regarded the quality of that care as good, even though the answers at home tended to be somewhat more critical than those given in hospital. The administration of questionnaires in the hospital setting was easier, more controlled, and more economical than sending the questionnaire to the patient's home. The results of the Primary Phase showed that both patients and nurses regarded the quality of patient care in the operating departments as good, even though nurses were significantly ($p<0.001$) more critical than patients. Both patients and nurses gave high ratings for physical activities and staff characteristics, but identified problems in educational activities. Patients rated support for initiative and relief of anxiety as less successful than nurses. Nurses were critical about the time pressure under which they had to work, the general atmosphere, the lack of time for patients and patients' long waiting times, but patients did not share these experiences. Patients were very pleased with the care they had received in the recovery room, but nurses occasionally felt that the recovery room was restless and overcrowded. Overall, patients and nurses had very similar assessments in different departments, but some differences ($p<0.05$) were nonetheless detected.

The most significant ($p<0.05$) background factors entered into the developed questionnaire were age, employment and marital status, education, previous operations, type of anaesthesia, patient's recollection of stay in the operating department, elective or emergency surgery, preoperative meeting with surgeon and anaesthesiologist, and knowledge of operation and anaesthesia. The new questionnaire was structured around the following components: 1) Physical care (pain management, temperature maintenance and technical skills), 2) Information, 3) Supporting initiative, 4) Respect, 5) Characteristics of staff, 6) Progress of nursing process, and 7) Atmosphere. The most significant factor with respect to the improvement of the quality of perioperative care is that the quality of care is measured and evaluated and that patients are involved in this process.

Keywords: pre-, intra-, post- and perioperative care, review, quality, measurement, perioperative patients and nurses, operating department.