



Nurses' attitudes towards family caregivers' involvement in medication safety – results of a quantitative vignette study

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Background

Family caregivers are considered significant players in healthcare in Switzerland. They regularly work hand in hand with healthcare professionals, particularly with nurses. Attending to their loved ones, they often gain considerable expertise and specific knowledge about their healthcare needs. However, little is known about caregivers' roles in the medication process, specifically about their patient-related safety concerns. As part of a larger research project using a sequential mixed methods design, this quantitative experimental vignette study explores the attitudes of nurses towards caregivers' involvement in medication safety.

Research Question / Aim

To identify the predictors of healthcare professionals' attitudes towards, responses to, and actions derived from family involvement in their safety-relevant behaviors.

Method / Procedure

All members of a nurses' professional association from three Swiss cantons were requested to participate in the online survey. A sample of 366 nurses was achieved (response rate 12%). Randomized vignettes described practical situations in hospitals with visitors of patients questioning safety-relevant behaviors of nurses regarding medication. The participants indicated their level of approval (on a discrete rating scale), their response (encouraging, discouraging or neutral), and whether they would review the medication as a result of such questioning and who with (peer or MD). In addition, participant-specific covariates were collected, such as professional experience, position, education, private caregiving, and socio-demographics. An essential advantage of the vignette design lies in its ability to estimate *ceteris paribus* effects of single vignette items with only a small number of vignettes per participant. Level of approval was modeled by fractional regression, encouragement/discouragement by ordered logistic regression, and reviewing of medication by multinomial logistic regression, controlling for cross-sectional fixed effects regarding the effect of vignette parameters.

Results

Nurses approve significantly more strongly of visitors questioning their medication safety-relevant behavior, if they know the relationship between visitor and patient (child/partner/parent/unrelated), if they are addressed in a non-accusing manner, and if they have experienced a similar situation before. If nurses are approached in the halls/corridors rather than the patient rooms, they are more likely to include a peer or MD in the review of the medication, and to reply in an encouraging manner. Nurses also more often include a peer or MD, the more often visitors of patients are present during their work, if a visitor is a healthcare professional her-/himself and below pensionable age, and if the nurse provides care for an own family member in her/his private environment. Encouraging replies are more frequent if the relationship between visitor and patient is known to the nurse, if the state of health of the patient is non-critical, if the involvement is non-accusing, and if a similar situation has been experienced before.

Discussion

The evidence implies that the parameters of the specific situation, as well as the individual attributes of the nurse, significantly affect their attitude, reply and reaction. Interestingly, no significant evidence was found of the specific content in question (type/quantity/frequency of medication) affecting these outcomes.



Conclusion

The highlighted predictors of nurses' attitudes towards caregivers' involvement implicate how medication safety could be positively influenced by knowledge, relationship, and communication.