

QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM IN A HAEMODIALYSIS UNIT AND PATIENT SATISFACTION

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INTRODUCTION Haemodialysis Units nowadays adopt a Quality Management System (QMS) which can be successfully applied to renal care, in order to ensure the provision of healthcare services that meet high standards of quality. The implementation of a QMS is a strategic decision to promote effectiveness, reliability and safety in a Haemodialysis Unit, but also to increase the patients' contentment and faith that they receive the best possible care.

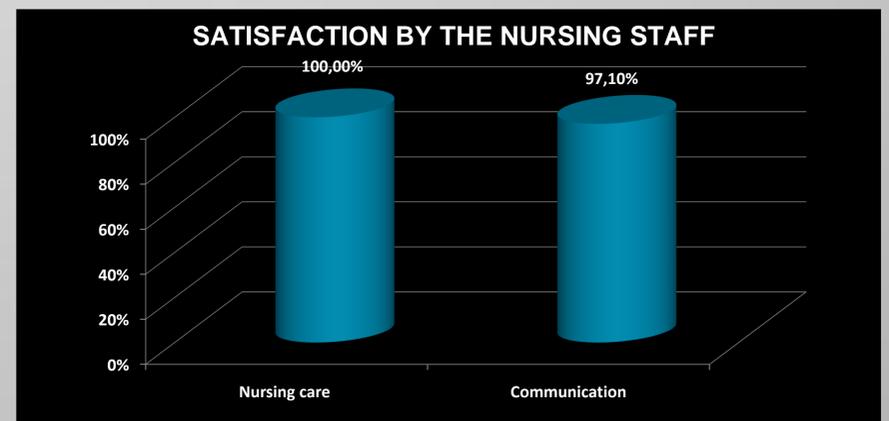
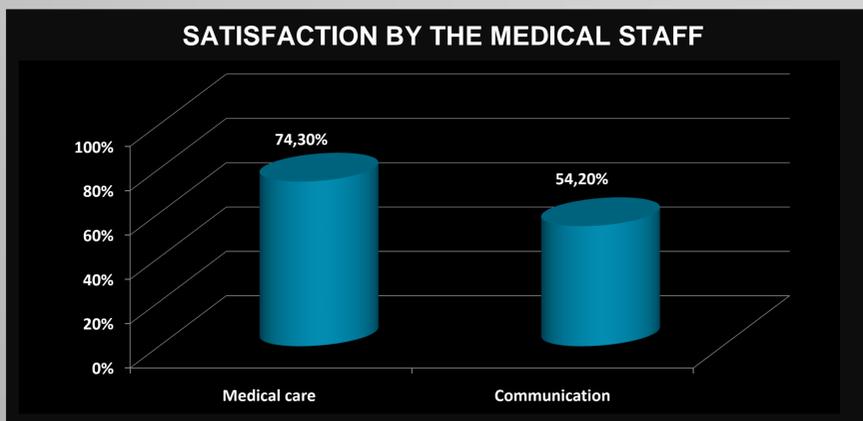
AIM The purpose of this study was to ascertain whether the implementation of the ELOT EN ISO 9001:2015 Quality Management System, for the "Provision of Dialysis Services in Patients with Renal Failure", in a Haemodialysis Unit affected the patients' level of trust and satisfaction.

MATERIAL AND METHOD The QMS specified directives for all services of the Haemodialysis Unit and all processes were categorized in General Procedures (GP) which composed the Quality Manual. Among the procedures regulated was the Control of the patients' suggestions and complaints (GP.HU.150), which made use of a questionnaire composed of 11 questions to evaluate the patients' trust and satisfaction regarding the healthcare provided. A structured interview was conducted according to the stipulations of the Annual audit and review performed to ensure the continuous compliance of the Haemodialysis Unit with the quality requirements. The data were collected in June 2018 with the participation of 35 patients undergoing Chronic Haemodialysis at the Haemodialysis Unit continuously for at least the last 6 months.

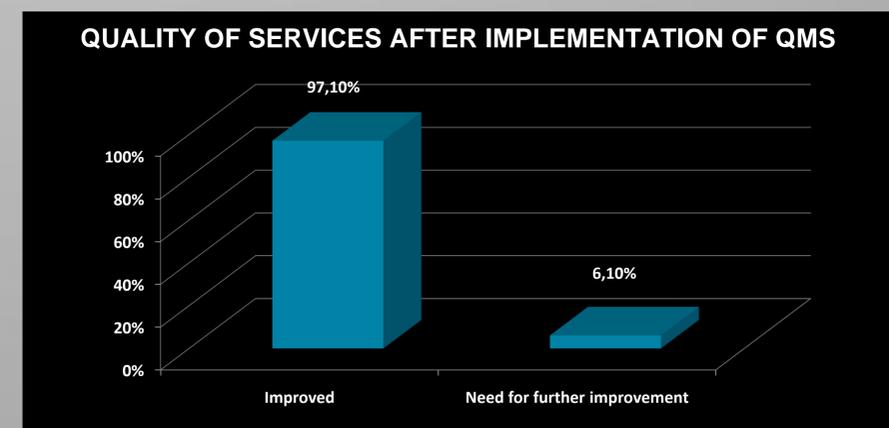
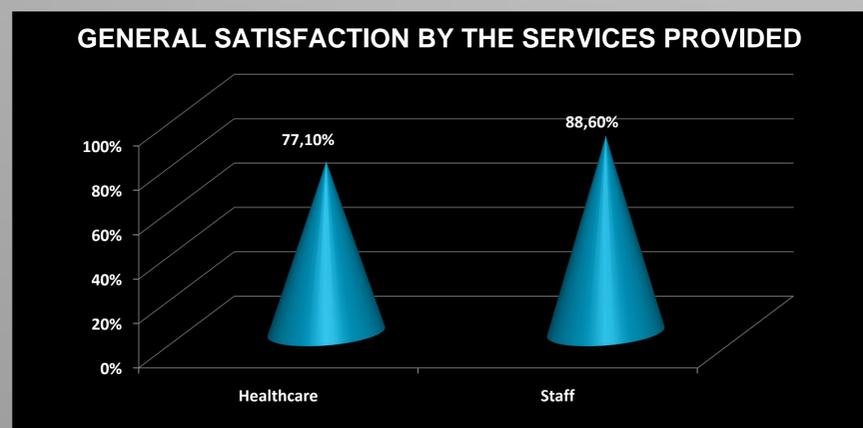
GENERAL PROCEDURES OF THE HAEMODIALYSIS UNIT	
GP.HU.110	Control of documents and records
GP.HU.120	Periodic review and Annual audit
GP.HU.130	Control of Quality Indicators /Statistical data
GP.HU.140	Management of non-conforming incidents, corrective and preventive actions
GP.HU.150	Control of clients' suggestions and complaints
GP.HU.210	Human Resources Management
GP.HU.310	Control of product supplies
GP.HU.410	Management of Water Treatment Station, Equipment, Environmental conditions
GP.HU.510	Directives for the implementation of clinical protocols
GP.HU.520	Directives for the treatment of patients on periodic haemodialysis
GP.HU.530	Directives for the hospitalized patients undergoing haemodialysis
GP.HU.540	Evaluation and monitoring of treatment of patients on haemodialysis

RESULTS

The implementation of the QMS which stipulated the directive for the Control of the patients' suggestions and complaints enabled the identification of the patients' individual needs and the areas that required more attention. According to the study results, 74,3% of the patients stated that they were content by the care provided by the medical staff, but only 54,2% found the information they were given by the doctors regarding their health condition to be adequate and understandable. It is also interesting that 34,3% of the patients wished that the medical staff of the unit was more easy to approach. All of the patients (100%) however, stated that the nursing staff provided high quality care and almost all (97,1%) felt that the nursing staff was caring, easy to communicate and discuss with.



As far as the general levels of satisfaction, 77,1% of the patients stated that they were in general satisfied by the healthcare provided at the Haemodialysis Unit and 88,6% were satisfied by the interest shown for their individual needs by the healthcare personnel. More specifically, 97,1% of the patients stated that the services provided by the Haemodialysis Unit had been improved after the implementation of the QMS and that requests such as the installation of TVs have been met. Moreover, they felt that their suggestions and complaints were taken into consideration because of the use of the QMS questionnaire and that the Haemodialysis Unit was more reliable since it had received accreditation. Lastly, only 6,1% of the patients stated that specific areas of the services required further improvement, such as the meals provided.



DISCUSSION

The implementation of a QMS in healthcare has been proven to lead to continuous improvement of the services provided in order to consistently meet patients' needs and to evaluate their satisfaction². However, in many health-care institutions, assessment of patient satisfaction is not performed routinely^{1,5}. This was also the case in our study, since prior the implementation of the QMS in the Haemodialysis Unit (HU) there was no established process used to evaluate patient satisfaction. According to our study results, 77,1% of the patients were satisfied in general by the healthcare provided at the HU and 88,6% were satisfied by the interest shown for their individual needs. This is similar to other studies, where patients very rarely evaluated the services provided as "bad" and the level of satisfaction with inter-personal care was high^{1,6}. Moreover, 74,3% of our sample stated that they were satisfied by the care provided by the medical staff and 100% by the nursing staff. However, only 54,2% were satisfied by the information given to them by the doctors of the HU, a finding similar to a previous study which indicated that the information dialysis patients receive by the physicians about prognosis is frequently unsatisfactory⁴. In addition, 34,3% of our patients wished that the medical staff of the HU was more approachable, whereas 97,1% stated that the nursing staff was easy to communicate with and caring. This result is in accordance to other studies that found patients to be in closer contact with the nursing staff than with physicians in general and during the greater part of the HD session^{1,3}. Lastly, the implementation of the QMS had a positive impact on the patients' satisfaction level, as 97,1% of them stated that there was improvement of the services, in accordance to some of their suggestions. They also felt that their opinion mattered and similarly to another study, this fact had a good psychological impact on them and encouraged them¹. A small percentage of our sample, 6,1%, requested further improvement of certain areas, such as the dietary services, which is an area that receives low satisfaction scores in several other studies as well^{1,6}. The results of this study therefore, which are in accordance to the findings of an older study¹, stated the importance of exploring the patients opinions as it leads to improvement of the services provided in a HU.

CONCLUSIONS

The implementation of a Quality Management System in a Haemodialysis Unit establishes the use of a questionnaire to evaluate the patients' suggestions and complaints, leading therefore, to the provision of healthcare better adapted to them and to elevated levels of patient contentment due to the better understanding of their individual needs. Moreover, the QMS allows the documentation of the quality of the services provided through evidence based Quality Indicators and leads to a cultural transformation with an emphasis on continuous improvement which further enhances the patients' trust.

In conclusion, a Quality Management System can be a useful tool in the hands of healthcare providers in their quest to achieve holistic care for their patients which leads to increased satisfaction.