

Problems of Patients in Hospitals in Vietnam and Suggestions for Social Work Activities

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Abstract

WHO indicates that the health triangle consists of: Physical, Social, and Mental Health. They have strong relationship and effect to each other. Thus, patient in hospital should not only care for physical health but they should also be supported in mental and social health. This paper aims to describe problem facing by patients in hospital thus discuss about social work activities in supporting patients to deal with their problems.

Keywords - Hospital, social worker, social work activities, patients, medical staff

I. INTRODUCTION

In Vietnam currently there are about 1,125 hospitals with 215,640 beds. Among them, there are 46 central hospitals with 26,756 beds, 447 provincial hospitals with 110,549 beds, 1,214 district hospitals with 77,134 beds and 155 non-public hospitals with 9,501 beds (According to the statistics yearbook, 2017). Most hospitals at the central level are overloaded. Medical staff do not have enough time and ability to support needs of patients. Therefore, many negative problems arise with patients and reduce the effectiveness of medical treatment.

Social work plays an important role in building a harmonious relationship between the physical and mental patients, between patients and their relatives, between patients and physicians, with medical facilities and with the community. Effective social work in hospitals will contribute to changing awareness and promoting positive behaviors, preventing and minimizing negative impacts affecting relationships, creating favorable conditions and improving efficiency. results in medical examination and treatment for people. Recognizing the above problem, there have been many policies and guidelines to connect and bring social work into hospitals. It could be listed such as Project 32 of the Prime Minister on "Development of Social Work profession in the period of 2010 - 2020" and the Project on "Development of Social Work in the Health Sector for the period 2011-2020" of the Ministry of Health. Recently, in 2015, the Ministry of Health issued Circular 43 stipulating the social work duties of

hospitals and the organization of implementing social tasks of hospitals. However, social work activities in hospitals are still underdeveloped. This article will describe the problems that patients are currently facing, thus providing suggestions for social work activities to support solving these problems.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Describe the problems that patients currently face in medical treatment process and suggest social work activities to assist patients in resolving their problems.

III. RESEARCH SCOPE

- Time of study: From 2015 to 2018
- Scope of study: The study was conducted in some hospitals having social work department. They are: Bach Mai hospital, Hospital K, Hospital 108, Phu Tho General Hospital.
- Research object: Patient; Social workers in hospital; Medical staff.

IV. RESEARCH METHODS

A. Documenting Method

- Study relevant documents to learn about the need for Social Work activities in hospitals.
- Study policy documents related to research issues
- Study case management records in social work departments in hospitals.

B. In-depth Interview Method

- In-depth interviews with 6 patients at selected hospitals to find out deeply about their needs and desires
- In-depth interview for 15 social workers in hospitals and 6 doctors/nurses to learn about the situation of social work activities being implemented, effectively these activities and their wishes in raising Highly effective social work
- In-depth interviews with 3 managers at selected hospitals to learn more about the impact factors as well as solutions to improve operational efficiency

C. Group Discussion Method

Conducting a group discussion with the participation of social worker currently working at the hospital to discuss in depth related issues and provide solutions to improve the effectiveness of social work activities in hospitals to support patient dealing with their problem

D. Questionnaires Method

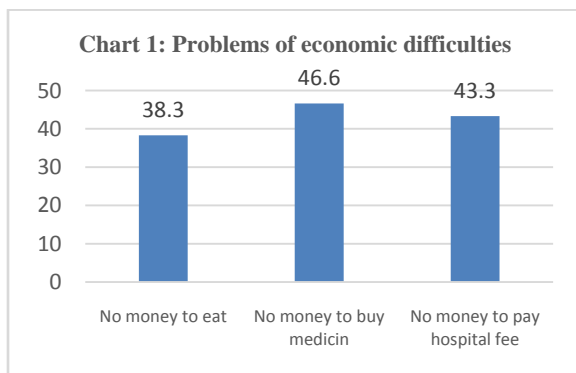
Investigate the questionnaire to collect information through conducting a direct interview with the researcher to describe problems of patient and the status of social work activities in hospitals. The questionnaire will be investigated with:

- Patient: 60 people
- Social workers in hospitals: 40 people

V. THE PATIENT'S PROBLEMS IN HOSPITAL

A. Economic Difficulties

Difficult economic problems are one of the problems that most patients face. The survey area in this study are all public hospitals, where people come to medical examination in many different economic sectors so this result is objective. In fact, this problem also reflects the current reality. Recently, mass media have talked much to reflect on hospital fees and medicine prices soaring. This is one of the pressing issues of many people and patients in the process of treatment.

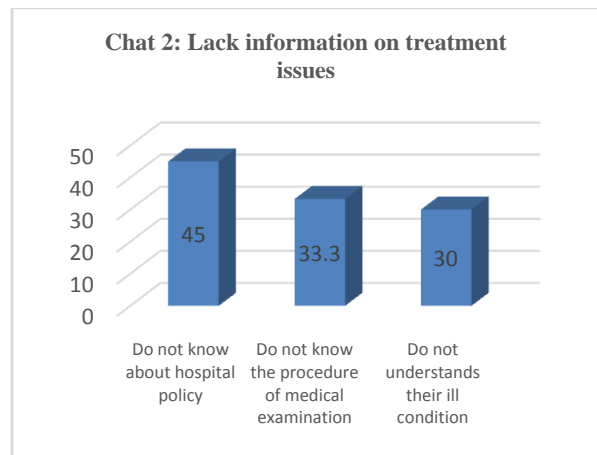


Among the interviewed patients, about 23 people (38,3%) said they did not have enough money to eat, did not have enough money to buy medicine (46,6%) and did not have enough to pay the hospital fee (43,3%). There is no significant difference in the ratio among the three, but with half of those who have these choices is a sign of concern for health because it is clear if there is no treatment, drug or payment, then patients will get in many bad consequences. Obviously, if hospitals have activities to advocate or connect to the service, it can help a lot more patients during the hospital treatment.

B. Lack of Information on Treatment

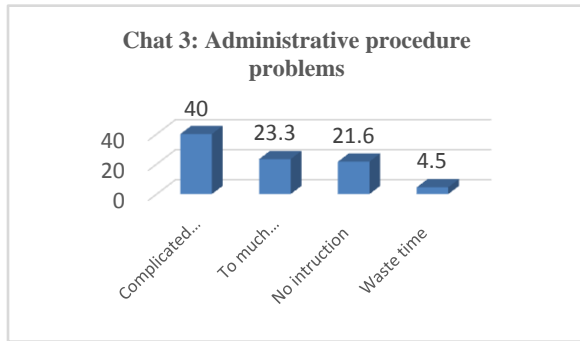
The proportion of patients who do not know about hospital policy is the majority which are 27 people (45%), then the proportion of patients who do not know the procedure of medical examination is 20 people (33,3%) and at least the rate of patients who do not understand their ill condition.

In fact, patient and their family members often only care about the disease and how to treat it to get better quickly. Stemming from this situation, medical staff will mainly provide information about the disease, how to take medicine, but hardly provide information about the hospital's policy. However, in fact, there are many patients who want to be provided with information about policies in the hospital, especially information on insurance policies or for poor patients, they are very wishing to understand their priority policies. This shows that the hospital needs to focus more on the widespread dissemination of hospital policies to patients, and it also needs to help patients grasp the medical examination process and their condition.



C. Problems with Administrative Procedures

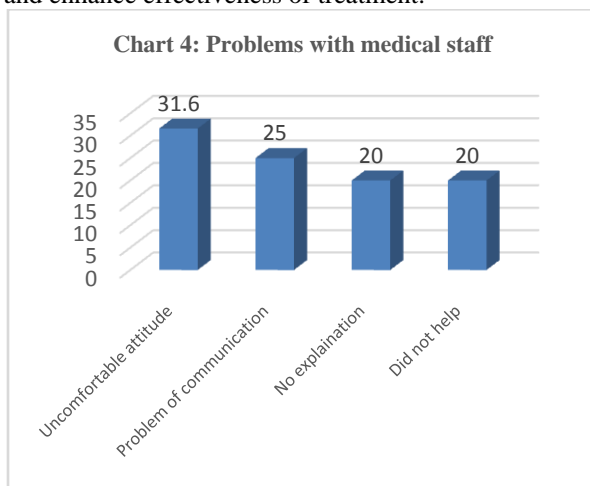
The next problem that patients often face during treatment is related to administrative procedures. According to mass media about the problems in the hospital, it is actually noticed that the hospital overload as well as the troublesome administrative procedures in the hospital. Most people go to hospital, they have to go to 3, 4 places with different places and many people are new so they don't know what to do. Furthermore, often they have to wait long time (normally 2,3 hour) to get examination and treatment. During the treatment, the problems related to registration or insurance procedures or information also makes patients involve in difficulties.



The proportion of patients show that administrative procedures are complicated is the highest compared to other opinions (24 people holding 40%). This shows the need to reduce the load of administrative procedures in hospitals to save the time and effort of patients and their families, as well as help save costs for hospitals. The assessment of the "Too much administrative procedures" and "No instruction" also accounts for a significant proportion (about 23,3% and 21,6%), which indicates a need for changes in administrative procedures. Other solution is that we need to have person in charge of supporting patient to deal with administrative procedure problems. Experience shows that social worker in hospital in other countries work well with this duty.

D. Problems with Medical Staff

Expressing the uncomfortable attitude of medical staff is a problem that many patients think is difficult and there are 19 people holding 31.6% of patients show that they have this problem. Next is the problem of communication with medical staff (15 people - 25%), medical staff did not explain (12 people - 20%), medical staff did not help (12 people - 20%). Thus, it is necessary to change the attitudes of medical staff to patients in order to reduce problems of patient and enhance effectiveness of treatment.



In fact, hospitals in Vietnam, especially public hospitals, normally are overload of patient, so the treatment of patients is not attentive. Moreover, because many patients have a thought when they come to the hospital, they have to rely on medical staff thus to make medical staff become bossy and have improper reactions. Moreover, because of many patients, the medical team also has a lot of pressure, therefore, it is sometimes caused problems for patients during treatment at the hospital. Therefore, in addition to improving the quality of treatment and health policy development, helping medical staff relieve stress, pressure on them will also help improve the quality of treatment and patients will benefit from that.

VI. DISCUSSION ABOUTSOCIAL WORK ACTIVITIES IN SUPPORTING PATIENTS IN HOSPITALS

A. Counseling for patients

Counseling is the activity of providing and analyzing information, and depending on the area, the consultant has the right to give advice to client. If professional advice such as doctors, lawyers, the consultant plays an expert role and gives advice to clients. However, when the social worker advises patients and families, they only provide information so that patients and families can choose the right solutions for their circumstances and needs. Although in a consulting role, social workers do not make decisions on behalf of their clients. Counseling plays a very important role in supporting patients. Advice to help patients to face their problems, with real life, to help cope effectively, help patients bear their own responsibilities. Counseling provides accurate information, avoiding ambiguity, thus helping patients increase their understanding of themselves and their circumstances, aware of resources and limitations, segment problems, identify problem. From these positive effects, counseling helps patients reduce negative emotions in difficult situations, easing emotional stress.

Firstly, counseling provides information to patients such as procedures, administrative regulations of the hospital. Patients on examination may lack information on administrative procedures, medical examination and treatment procedures, emergency procedures, procedures for inpatient or outpatient examination. This is especially difficult for first-time hospital attendants, large and overcrowded institutes, and incomplete signs. The content of the second consultation includes information related to food, accommodation and travel for patients and their families. For inpatients, or those who require long-term treatment, accommodation for patients and family

members is a problem that requires help from social workers. The third piece of advice concerns new policies of the State, domestic organizations and non-governmental organizations to help patients know and benefit from the preferential policies of these organizations.

B. Working with Medical Staff in the Hospital

Social workers work together with doctors, nurses and other administrative staff in the hospital to support patients. If doctors, nurses, and nurses are in charge of medical care, social workers have a duty to support patients to enjoy incentives and regimes that are appropriate for their rights and interests. In the working group, the role of social workers lies in the middle, connecting the resources in the group to meet the overall needs of patients and families. Not only is the need for medical care, patients and families come to the hospital also bring a lot of financial worries, caregivers, travel, accommodation, worries about illness, and Other worries. Social workers are people who listen to understand the wishes of patients and their families, make sure medical staff to understand patient's expectations to have treatment plan to respond patient's need. Responding to needs and expectations as well as discussing patients' ideas to help the medical team to correct and improve the quality of patient care during the treatment process.

C. Advocate for Patients' Rights

According to the IFSW (2013), advocacy is an activity to promote and protect human rights, especially for disadvantaged people; promoting social justice for all disadvantaged people in the community. Social work in hospitals needs to take advocacy to help patients enjoy health care services and other relevant care they deserve in accordance with the State and Hospital; protect the rights of patients, especially patients in difficult circumstances; create opportunities for patients to express their difficulties and aspirations. Thus, the advocacy work of social workers in hospitals is an action that directly represents, protects, intervenes, supports and proposes rights and personal interests of patients and their families. towards social justice. The meaning of Advocacy helps the disadvantaged group regain the legitimate rights they are not entitled to. It can be seen that, in the face of social injustices, these groups are weak and have little or no ability to protect themselves. The reason is that they do not know the law and do not have a social position. So, the task of social workers is to represent to these people with their voices, to help these groups find the rights they lost.

D. Build Networks and Connect Patient Support Services

The network is an official or informal link between individuals and other organizations to share resources, skills, relationships and knowledge with each other. (Baker, 1999). Accordingly, network construction is the process of building strong and strong relationships that both sides benefit. Service connection is an assessment of a patient's needs, including medical needs as well as other social needs, and at the same time connecting with services within and outside the community. Social workers will need to build a network of services and resources to match the needs of each patient and family. This connection aims to prevent possible illness or prevent disease from furthering, or to restore health and rehabilitation. Helping patients connect with social support systems so that patients who need support can be contacted with these systems. Seek support from organizations, businesses, philanthropists and those who wish to be charitable to support patients and disadvantaged communities, the poor, the unfortunate people.

E. Mobilize Resources to Support Patients

Resource mobilization is the process of attracting all organizations and individuals to participate in the contribution of human, financial, physical and spiritual resources to carry out certain activities. Social workers in the hospital mobilize resources to support the needs of patients related to economic problems that patients and state agencies cannot meet. Resources to be mobilized can be in or out of the hospital, such as sponsors, companies, organizations or related projects. People who directly benefit from resource mobilization are patients because resource mobilization helps to obtain funding, other necessary support to meet the physical and mental care for patient. Some patients who move to the hospital do not have the funding to continue treatment, are forced to leave the hospital to go home without proper medical care. This situation can be life-threatening for patients who need hospital care for serious illnesses. So, the mobilization of resources is essential to reduce the number of people who have to give up health care despite being in a state of emergency only because of insufficient financial resources. In addition, resource mobilization also increases the community responsibility of every member and organization: Through participation in direct support network or financial contribution to patient support, Organizations and individuals will see their responsibilities to the community and the meaning of helping them in difficult situations.

VII. CONCLUSION

The project of developing social work profession in the health sector in the period of 2010 to 2020 was approved by the Ministry of Health in 2011. Until now, many hospitals have established their own social work department to help patients. After the implementation period, social policy in the health sector has appeared in a number of central and provincial hospitals. According to initial recognition, these activities have contributed to providing the information requested by patients and relatives of patients; connecting patients with services in and out of the hospital; support motor activities for disabled patients, elderly people and children; calling on the community to help disadvantaged patients. However, parallel to the achieved achievements of the application of social work models in hospitals, the implementation of social work activities has many shortcomings such as: Organizational mechanism, quantity and quality of human resources for social work in hospitals; communication work to propagate the project activities. Thus, improving the quality of social work in hospitals, contributing to solving urgent needs in health care, needs a long-term and appropriate development roadmap in parallel with raising awareness and commitment of leaders in health sector in the development of social work in hospital.

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