

Guest Editorial

Health Care

Unsafe acts are like mosquitoes. You can try to swat them one at a time, but there will always be others to take their place. The only effective remedy is to drain the swamps in which they breed.

James T. Reason [2]

Nowadays a lot of discussion takes place on how to optimize patient safety. Yet patient safety is only one of the factors within the health care system which require immediate improvement. However, it is quite difficult to differentiate between the various factors and to change them separately. They rather need to be regarded as a unit to draw the optimum benefit from the improvements. Thus, for example, disburdening nurses allows the patients to regain the focus of attention since the staff is now able to spend more time on each individual patient. This way patient safety will be increased automatically as (health) problems the patients face, may be noticed and taken care of earlier.

Every one of us knows the path of the patient through the health care system, either as a patient his/herself, as a relative or close friend of a patient, or as a health care provider. Along this path the patient is confronted with numerous problems and unsafe acts; however, not only the patient but also the staff taking care of the patient along this path faces them as well.

This present special health care issue of *WORK* accompanies within nine individual papers the path of the patient through the health care system, from admission to the hospital to (follow-up) home care. It observes both the problems the patients are confronted with and the difficulties the health care providers have to face along this path and gives an insight on how these problems and difficulties may be solved and handled.

Various solutions are implemented already, but we need to continue searching for new solutions and ideas for improvement to achieve the desired results. Those are the highest possible level of safety and comfort com-

bined with effectiveness, efficiency and satisfaction for the staff as well as for the patients.

At this point, I would like to thank all the authors, once again, for contributing to this special issue and for pointing out all those inconvenient and hazardous circumstances the patients and the staff are facing and the possible solutions in very vivid reports. A special “thank you” goes to Karen Jacobs for offering this opportunity, this wonderful platform and all her support.

The German physician, journalist and comedian Eckart von Hirschhausen came up with the conclusion: *There are no healthy humans – only patients who had not been examined thoroughly enough [1].*

In this regard: Keep an eye on all those unsafe acts, non-ergonomic situations and potential hazards, and keep searching for solutions. Sometimes you become a patient and will be confronted with them faster than expected.

Sincerely

Guest Editor

Sonja Koneczny, Ph.D.

Experimental-OR, University Hospital Tuebingen and
Tuebingen Center for Patient Safety and Simulation

University Hospital Tuebingen

Tuebingen, Germany

Tel.: +49 179 4751715

E-mail: sonja.koneczny@web.de

References

- [1] Arzt-Deutsch/Deutsch-Arzt, Eckart von Hirschhausen, Langenscheidt KG, Berlin & München, 2007, p. 74.
- [2] Marilyn Sue Bogner, ed., *Human Error in Medicine*, Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Assoc., 1994, p. xiv.