

2nd International Patient Safety Day - 17 September 2016

Main topic: Working together to prevent medication errors

Press release

2nd International Action Day for Patient Safety: Working together to prevent medication errors

Berlin, Zürich, Wien, 23 June 2016 – At the 2nd International Patient Safety Day on 17 September 2016 the focus this year is on “medication safety”. The action day would like to raise awareness of the risks associated with the use of medicines and identify ways of tackling them. Under the slogan “Working together to prevent medication errors”, hospitals, nursing homes, pharmacies, rehabilitation centres and health organisations/associations are called on to illustrate ways of keeping the associated risks for the patients to a minimum. The organisers of the Austrian-German-Swiss joint action day are the *Aktionsbündnis Patientensicherheit e. V. (Action alliance patient safety) (APS) (D)*, the *Plattform Patientensicherheit (Patient safety platform) (A)* and the *Patient Safety Foundation (CH)*.

Medication administered at the wrong dose or taken incorrectly, active ingredients injected at the wrong site or a combination of various medicinal products with unfavourable interaction: errors in medication administration are the most frequent cause of what are known as adverse drug reactions (ADRs). The consequences range from minor health disorders down to the death of patients. ADRs are responsible for five percent of all hospital admissions. For around two percent of the people affected, they have a fatal outcome. The organisers of the action day note that around one in two ADRs were due to medication errors and were, therefore, basically avoidable.

Older patients suffer more frequently from ADRs because they are often on more medication for their health disorders. Furthermore, their metabolism changes as they grow older and this can impair both the efficacy and the tolerance of medication. Besides the damage to patients' health, the knock-on costs of medication errors place a burden on the healthcare system, too. “This problem will be further exacerbated by the demographic changes caused by an aging society.” This is the observation of Hedwig François-Kettner, First Chairwoman of APS, Dr Brigitte Ettl, President of the *Plattform Patientensicherheit* Austria and Professor Dieter Conen, President of the Patient Safety Foundation in Switzerland. At the same time, the procedures in the healthcare system were becoming increasingly complex.

They comment, “Unfortunately, adverse events can never be completely avoided no matter how much care is taken”. Nonetheless, the declared goal was to keep the risks associated with the administration of medicinal products to a minimum. “We would like to demonstrate that we can all help to raise awareness of the avoidable risks linked to the administration of medication and, by extension, further increase medication safety.” With high-impact publicity campaigns in Germany, Austria and Switzerland the organisers, along with their partner organisations, would like to send out a joint message: “Patient safety should play a decisive role in medical treatment”.

All health care facilities in Germany, Austria and Switzerland are, therefore, called on to participate. They should demonstrate what they are already doing in order to avoid the diverse risks associated with the use of medication. There are plans for activities like open days, panel discussions as well as information and advanced training events. “If everyone works together, then any harm to patients in health care facilities can be reduced to a minimum. This would constitute an important contribution to increased patient safety”, stress the organisers of the three partner organisations.

Further information:

International Patient Safety Day: www.patient-safety-day.org

Aktionsbündnis Patientensicherheit e. V. (D): www.aps-ev.de;

www.tag-der-patientensicherheit.de

Plattform Patientensicherheit (A): www.plattformpatientensicherheit.at;

www.tagderpatientensicherheit.at

Patient Safety Foundation (CH): www.patientensicherheit.ch;

www.aktionswoche-patientensicherheit.ch

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