

Playing an active role in treatment

Gone are the days when patients blindly accepted medical professionals' decisions about their care without participating in the process. In fact, new norms in patient safety requires active participation in their medical treatment to ensure the desired outcomes.



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WHO guidelines

The World Health Organisation (WHO), describing patient safety as a fundamental principle of healthcare, has developed a [Minimal Information Model for Patient Safety](#) as a simple tool to facilitate the collection, analysis, comparison, sharing, and global learning derived from adverse events. This reporting and learning system was developed through the analysis of real adverse event data provided by multiple institutions and countries.

In addition, [WHO Guidelines on Patient Safety Incident Reporting and Learning Systems](#) are scheduled to be released towards the end of 2017. The WHO says: “This guidance will include key lessons learned from experiences within and outside healthcare, guidance on enhancing the reporting of incidents, including adverse events, near misses and errors in healthcare, capturing and aggregating data, assessing progress, engaging patients in reporting and learning, and translating data into meaningful action for better quality and safer care.”

Locally, the Department of Health released the [National Guideline for Patient Safety, Incident Reporting and Learning](#) in May this year.

Medication and patient safety

Patient awareness, communication and reporting extends to adverse effects of medication. “Many patients fail to read the medication package inserts, and many do not report any side effects they experience (whether expected or unexpected) to their healthcare providers,” says Dr Nicola Lister, medical director and chief scientific officer at Novartis South Africa.

“By reading the information they are given by their healthcare providers, adhering to the dosage instructions, acquainting themselves with the package inserts, asking questions about the treatment, and by reporting any side effects, patients empower doctors to deliver more effective treatment and help drug manufacturers to ensure that products are as safe and effective as possible.”

“Reporting tools and systems such as these can only be truly effective when accurate information is submitted. And in most cases, the most accurate information about side effects comes from the patients themselves. This is why it is important that patients communicate and report to their doctors and pharmacists. They can even report adverse effects directly to the pharmaceutical manufacturers, or even to the health authority, namely the [Medicines Control Council](#) in South Africa,” says Lister.

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