

Quality standards in long-term nursing care

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Quality of health care service – set of characteristics of the service, reflecting service conformity to established requirements, current knowledge, available resources, professional requirements, patient’s satisfaction and health care needs (Min. of Soc. Aff. Nr.128; 15.12.04.)

Background: The level of long term nursing care quality differs significantly in care facilities (is sometimes poor), there is lack of common understanding of different quality requirements, evaluation of service quality is often complicated and for that reason opportunity to improve service quality is questionable.

Goal: Describe long term nursing care quality requirements, evaluation of service quality; services related to long term nursing care and conditions, needed for good level service; to make proposals for changes of decrees, related to long term nursing care on the basis of international experience and resources in Estonia.

Methods: Systematic review of basic documents and literature, expert group discussions, interviews with experts.

Results: Set of quality requirements (QR) for long term nursing care, ordered by Estonian Health Insurance Fund and issued in cooperation with Estonian Nurses Union, EGGA.

The core conception of the requirements: long term nursing care is health care service, integrated with several related services (mostly social care services).

Topics handled in requirements:

1. Specified definitions.
2. Description of the target group and demographic trends until 2025.
3. The structure of needs of the target group.
4. Services for elderly.
5. Integrated services: foundation and possibilities to implement in Estonia.
6. Quality requirements for long term nursing care (minimum standards).

The key terms of QR are based on John Overtveit’s quality components: professional quality, client’s quality, management’s quality. Requirements are compiled for using simple assessment model: PDCA (plan, do, check, act) methodology for assessment of process and improvement of quality.

QR: Management – top management for nursing care, strategies for development, policy of organization, usage of resources. *Documentation* – documentation must be in conformity of the independent long term nursing care principles and allow to assess all processes of the care; list and description of nursing care documentation is provided. *Professional quality*- competence, minimum ratio for personnel for 20 beds, recommended personnel, personnel need for twenty-four hours care. *Patients quality* – communication with patient and his/her family, patient’s rights, assessment of patients satisfaction; separately are described QR for rooms etc. *Assessment of the needs* – main types/levels of assessment, competence requirements, documentation, need for comprehensive approach. *Risks* – requirements for avoiding the risks (17) and indicators for assessment.

Additional materials: Services in hospice; interdisciplinary team; care for demented patients, geriatric social work.

Conclusions: Quality requirements for Long Term Nursing Care allow care managers and providers to use standardized principles in care process, keep nursing care on good quality level or to improve if needed and optimize the use of resources.