Nursing Sensitive Criteria for the Selection of 'European Centres of Excellence'

In the context of the **Patients' rights in Cross Border Healthcare EU Directive** (2011/24/EU), the Commission shall support Member States in the development of European reference networks (*Article 12*) between healthcare providers and centres of expertise in order to improve the access to the provision of high-quality healthcare to all patients. The **European Reference Networks** are expected to aim at helping to realise the potential of European Cooperation on high quality healthcare, maximising the cost-effective use of resources, encouraging the development of quality and safety benchmarks to help develop and spread best practices, and helping Member States to provide highly quality services in particular conditions or lack of resources.

For that purpose, the Commission shall adopt a list of specific criteria and conditions that the European Reference networks must fulfil to receive support from the Commission. Therefore, the EFN proposes to the Commission to incorporate the below evidence based nursing sensitive criteria in order to fulfil the qualitative requirements of the European Centres of Excellence and to enhance nursing policy and practice in these settings. Such nursing sensitive criteria include:

- Workplace policies that support continuity of care, with services using holistic approaches tailored to individuals' care needs. A holistic and integrated approach will help to empower patients and enhance patient care.

- Establish systems to measure outcomes of continuity of care (patient sensitive quality indicators), quality of care and patient safety[i] as well as formalised networks for exchange of best practice.

- Accurate, comprehensive, up to date, clear, user-friendly, standardised, accessible, integrated, secure (respecting data protection and inform consent) and rapidly available patient records[ii,iii].

- Clear understanding about the exchange of necessary and relevant health care information between the different levels of care[iv].

- Develop nursing leadership and research opportunities and encourage professional autonomy.

- Interoperable eHealth services to support channels of communication among healthcare professionals and clear mechanism for information sharing.

- Nursing terminology, such as International Classification for Nursing Practice (ICNP®), should be integrated in patient records, in order to ensure quality of care, patient safety and nursing sensitive outcomes[v,vi,vii,viii].

- Clear identification of roles and responsibilities defined for registered nurses and advanced nurse practitioners[ix,x],

- High standards of cooperation, active flows of communication, team working and multidisciplinary approach to be brought together within integrated delivery systems. Use an integrated approach to service planning, financing, organisation re-structuring and implementation.

- Workplace policies that promote positive practice environments and protect the rights and entitlements of nurses, specifically around sick leave or maternity leave benefits. Strong policies in place to monitor workloads and shift work[xi]; levels of qualifications and education; and ensure optimal staffing skill mix ratios, and of professionals as the evidence shows a strong correlation between staffing levels and that research has positive patient outcomes[xii].

- Support and facilitate information and forecasting on service provision[xiii.]

- Continuity of communication and information sharing between primary and secondary care

levels, specifically among the centres of excellence, and health and social care systems[xiv].

- Evaluation and improvement of assessment systems; standardised systems put in place to measure patient sensitive quality nursing indicators and assess the continuity and quality of the healthcare provided[xv].

- A competent, well-motivated and sustainable professional workforce, particularly nurses, to encourage capacity building when taking innovative solutions[xvi,xvii,xviii].

- Established Continuous Professional Development[xix] for nurses.

The EFN believes that European Centres of Reference that fulfil these criteria will be selected for participation in the European Reference Networks and will contribute to achieving cooperation, high quality healthcare and quality and safety benchmarks towards a holistic healthcare for the European citizens.

Nursing Criteria for the Selection of EU Centres of Excellence - December 2011

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