

Specialist Nurse Plays a Pivotal Role in the Improvement of the Quality of Care in IBD Patients

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Ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease are inflammatory bowel diseases (IBD) with a rapidly increasing prevalence [1] and high health care costs, both direct and indirect [2,3]. IBD are lifelong diseases that can impact upon growth, pregnancy, psychological health, quality of life, employment and relationship because are often complex diseases with possible complications and extraintestinal manifestations [4]; so, it is necessary a multidisciplinary team for the best management, and nurses are, of course, pivotal in this perspective.

The Nurses-European Crohn's and Colitis Organization (N-ECCO) provides education and networking so increasing quality of care in IBD patients and recently it published an updated version of their statements [5].

IBD patients with moderate to severe disease need a more complex therapy and in this setting biological agents have had a huge impact. The market of biological agents continues to expand with a number of anti-TNF α biosimilars and new agents with different mode of action; moreover, patients treated with these agents are increasing as well as the continuous increase in demands on gastroenterology services. So, it is becoming always more challenging to provide an optimal level of quality of care to improve patient outcomes [4] and the IBD specialist nurse can be protagonist in this context. The specialist nurse fulfills the role of an advance IBD nurse set out by the N-ECCO working closely with and coordinating other nurses becoming the liaison between the gastroenterologist and the infusion room. The IBD specialist nurse has moreover multiple roles: maintaining a database of IBD patients, increasing patient safety by ensuring screening for opportunistic infections and other factors, counselling and educating for patient/caregiver and coordinating regular follow up. All these roles are important but there's one that for sure is of paramount significance: education and patient empowerment [6]. Informed shared decision making between patient and the health care professionals is becoming always more important for defining the patient's best treatment option: by educating, patients become aware about treatment strategies and more confident and adherent to the treatment plan [7]. An educational program delivers information on current therapies, purposes of the treatment, possible switch to other biological agents, most common adverse effects and how to handle them [8] but, most importantly, education should be based on individual patient need, preferences and coping abilities for enabling patient empowerment [5]. Nurses play a pivotal role in this setting because they are usually the interface between patients and the wider IBD team and patients often feel free to ask them about their concerns.

The IBD specialist nurse contribute significantly in the improvement in quality of care turning out an invaluable service to meet and constantly increase standards in inflammatory bowel diseases management by means of a patient-centered service.

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