Surgical Patient Safety, Thailand Experiences

To the Editor,

In 1997, Thailand suffered from economic crisis or the so called “Tom Yum Kung Bubble Break” and the country was broke. Since then, public have been seeking more for the accountability, auditability and quality improvement in all institutions not excluding hospitals and healthcare services.

Since 1999, when the Healthcare Accreditation Institute (Public Organization) was established in Thailand, almost all hospitals have been accredited or reaccredited for their healthcare quality. However, at the beginning, there was no specific measure launched as a standard of care for surgical patients.

In 2009, the Royal College of Surgeons announced “Good Surgical Practice”, which was modified from the Royal College of Surgeons of England, for surgeons to follow. Therefore, this was compulsorily put in the curriculum program for all surgical trainees to attend the course.

In 2010, WHO Surgical Safety Checklist was introduced to Thailand. Many provincial hospitals have adopted this into practice on a voluntary basis. As a consequence, some hospitals faced ignorance or even worse, found strong resistance from surgeons.

How to encourage our community to use WHO checklists in the operating rooms nationwide is a challenging issue for the country, not only how to implement, but how to convince surgeons, anesthesiologists and OR nurses to comply sustainably. This needs collaboration between disciplines.

In 2011, the Royal College of Surgeons of Thailand urged other Colleges and Operating Room Nurses Association to also join the Healthcare Accreditation Institute. In March 2011, Declaration on Surgical Patient Safety Policy was first announced, recommending all institutes to adopt or modify WHO Surgical Safety Checklists into practice to fit to their own contexts. The College also enforced 25 training centers to follow these and put them in as one part of assessment for re-accreditation on surgical training. In addition, Surgical Patient Safety Campaigns were planned to promote nationwide through workshops, and conferences among the Community of Practice group.

A culture of patient safety and occurrence report system has become our routine practice at Siriraj Hospital for many years. At the Department of Surgery, a risk management team was set up in 2010 to independently analyze the adverse incidences. All disciplines related to surgery collaborated and WHO surgical safety checklist sheets were adopted and recognized as official documents in the IPD files. Workshop, VDO presentation, simulation, transaction site visit, monitoring, KPI and revision meeting were prepared until implementation was ready in January 2012.

Compliance rate was low in the first few months at 36%, although with continuing and striving campaign, it climbed up and exceeded 50% in 6 months and was sustained over 90% after 11 months. The incidence of wrong site surgery, retained foreign bodies or wrong or missing specimen was diminished.

More specific measures for Surgical Patient Safety were assessed and systematic approaches such as; patient identification, confidentiality, close loop communication, informed consents, drug reconciliation, surgical site infection, blood transfusion, retained foreign body, missing specimens, and etcetera were recognized. For sustainability, in 2015, we established the patient safety program in the curriculums of under-graduates in all medical schools and other healthcare professions in Thailand.

In September 2016, all sectors of healthcare leaders were gathering for self-assessment of patient safety status in the country under WHO standard tool guideline which provided the opportunity for further improvement. In the same event, the Minister of Public Health declared “National Patient and Personal Safety Goal” with the aims to; 1) set up goals and targets of Patients and Personnel Safety in all healthcare sectors, 2) support establishment
of national incidence reporting and learning systems, and 3) encourage the involvement of patients and public in patient safety policy.

At present (2016), more than 40 private and public hospitals have so far been accredited by JCI. The Healthcare Accreditation Institute takes a major role in surgical patient safety policy, working closely with the Royal College of Surgeons of Thailand and International College of Surgeons, Thailand Section. Since 2009 from first launching of “Good Surgical Practice” to “Surgical Patient Safety Checklist”, great efforts have been made with positive attitude to encourage our healthcare development which was initiated from local to regional and has now become accepted nationwide with strong commitment in most communities.

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