

Seoul Medical Center Emerges as a Leader of Integrated Nursing and Care Services

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Health Kyunghyang

Reported by Jang In-seon.



The Seoul Medical Center (SMC), which was the first hospital in Korea to adopt and implement the Integrated Nursing and Care Service Program (INCSP, formerly known as the Patient Reassurance Hospitals Program or PRHP), announced on May 17, 2016, that it has been named an “exemplar” of integrated nursing and care services by the National Health Insurance Service (NHIS).

Commended its successful adoption of the INCSP, the SMC will now share its experiences implementing the program with other leading medical institutions in Korea. It will receive delegations from the other institutions and provide customized consultations to further spread the INCSP across the nation.

The NHIS had been evaluating the best examples of integrated nursing and care services throughout Korea from April 20, before finally selecting the seven outstanding hospitals.

The other six hospitals chosen were Inha University in Incheon, NHIS Ilsan Hospital in Gyeonggi-do, Sejong General Hospital in Gyeonggi-do, Cheong Ju Medical Center in Chungcheongbuk-do, Busan Korea Hospital in Busan, and Bokwang Hospital in Daegu.

Even before its designation as exemplary, the SMC has been actively sharing its experiences and expertise with the program with delegates from other leading hospitals across the nation.

On April 21, 2016, the hospital held a meeting for all interested public hospitals to help them understand both the difficulties and rewards of the program.

The PRHP, the predecessor to the current INCSP, began in 2013 after a year of thoroughgoing preparations by the SMC. In the early days, the quality of service required by the program was so demanding that the turnover rate among its professional nurses soared. Over time, however, the program has proven to be a great success.

Kim Min-gi, CEO of the SMC, remarked, “Korea is the only country on earth where families are expected to dedicate themselves to caring for ill and bedridden family members. This nursing culture excessively dependent on family involvement was a major reason behind the rapid spread of the Middle Eastern Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) in Korea. So it is critical for nursing care in Korea to become part of universal public healthcare system that frees suffering families from the unbearable financial and social toll.”

Kim further commented, “The SMC will do its best as a pioneering exemplar of integrated nursing and caring services to ensure that all hospitals across Korea adopt the program and advance the quality of nursing for patients and their families.”

Seoul Medical Center, Now into Its third Year of Integrated Nursing and Care Services
Better Health for Patients, Better Rewards for Nurses

Doubling the number of nurses to ensure quality care for patients without family involvement

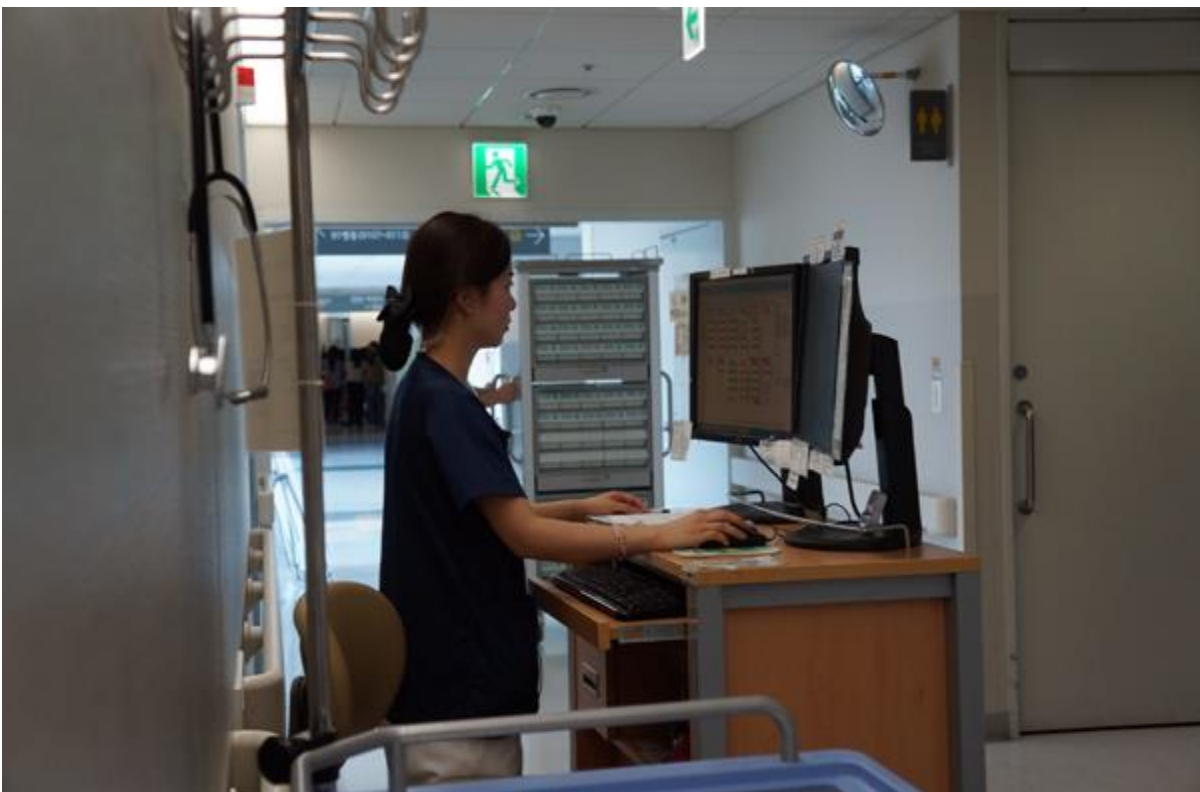
June 8, 2016

Reported by Gu Tae-woo.





▲ At SMC, nurses exchange detailed instructions with one another at shift changeovers so that patients can receive quality care from the nurses on every shift.



▲ A nurse at a computer station in a hallway of the SMC. The computer station is designed for nurses to monitor patients in their rooms around the clock. Nurse can also use mirrors in the hallway to gain a view of patients inside rooms to check whether they are at risk of falling from their beds.

“I don’t feel comfortable leaving patients to their family members or private nurses hired by families. Here, professional nurses care for patients 24/7. They play a critical role in patients’ health, even detecting symptoms that families and private nurses might fail to catch. That’s what professional nurses are supposed to do. Why didn’t we do this sooner?”

That was how Kim Nam-hee, a chief nurse at the Seoul Medical Center (SMC), assessed the new way of doing things through the Integrated Nursing and Care Service Program (INCSP). The INCSP is a public nursing and care service program in which professionals care for patients around the clock without requiring patients’ families to stay at the hospital all day. Professional nurses, orderlies, and other such qualified caretakers assist patients with everything, helping them eat food, maintain personal hygiene, and even bath.

The SMC, a public hospital run by the Seoul Metropolitan Government (SMG), is a major general hospital equipped with a total of 623 beds. At the SMC, you won’t see many family members staying with patients all day or sleeping near patients’ beds. The hospital intends to remove the portable cots for family members from patient rooms, leaving only one or two in each six-person room.

After a year of preparations, SMC finally adopted the INCSP in 2013, at the time known as the Patient Reassurance Hospitals Program (PRHP). Except for the hospice and mental wards, it involves professional nurses and caretakers taking care of patients in general wards (400 beds) around the clock. The SMC was designated one of the seven “exemplars” of integrated nursing and care services by the National Health Insurance Service (NHIS).

On June 3, 2016, *Labor Today* reporters and members of the Korean Health and Medical Workers’ Union visited the SMC in Jungnang-gu, Seoul, to investigate how three years under the INCSP has transformed the hospital. Labor unions and NGOs have been demanding such a program since 2009. In 2011, Gyeonggi-do and a few other local governments introduced similar programs in response to that demand.

The Medical Service Act, amended on December 29 2016, will expand the scope of the program nationwide beginning on September 30, 2017. The amended legislation requires that both the national and local governments introduce integrated nursing and care services in their jurisdictions by increasing workforce numbers and improving working conditions for professional nurses and caretakers. Public hospitals must implement this program in at least one ward each. By paying around 20 percent more than normal hospitalization costs, patients will be able to enjoy quality around-the-clock nursing and care services at any public hospital in Korea.

Family cots disappearing from patient rooms

Lee Bo-ram, a nurse who has been working in Ward 92 at the SMC for seven years, was monitoring a computer installed in a hallway when she was called into one of the patient rooms. A woman in her 70s had called for help. The woman asked a series of questions, all of which Lee was able to answer on the spot. Because there are nurses like Lee on standby 24/7 at the hospital, families no longer need to stay and tend to their ill family members. All

families need to do nowadays is sign documents upon patients' admission and discharge from the hospital and occasionally bring personal items that patients need.

Nurses stay at their substations in hallways to monitor patients' conditions. The convex mirrors placed along hallways provide easy views into patients' rooms, allowing nurses to check whether patients are comfortable in their beds or at any risk of falling out. Patients can press a button on their wristbands to call nurses when they need help. Nurses use walkie-talkies to communicate with one another on frequencies that are unique to each ward.

The medical staff at the SMC continues to provide feedback on the INCSP toward minimizing safety risks for patients and maximizing the efficiency of care. Numerous suggestions have been made regarding how to prevent patients from falling out of their beds.

The INCSP nurses work three shifts—day, evening, and night—and exchange detailed instructions during every shift change so that patients can continue to receive quality care irrespective of the shift. The electronic instruction system helps significantly. Nurses log onto this system to write and view notes on patients' health records and even families' psychological state. Nurses also leave Post-It notes by patients' beds, bearing such messages as: "Apply rash cream to hips" or "No food or water allowed."

Doubling the number of nurses and caretakers

The SMC has been praised by labor unions for the effective way in which it runs the INCSP. Working conditions have improved thanks to the increased number of nurses and caretakers hired. Staff can rely on convex mirrors, walkie-talkies, and computer management systems as tools for greater efficiency. The SMC ensures the quality of services by hiring more nurses and caretakers as needed.

There are 50 beds in Ward 92 at the SMC. Prior to the introduction of the INCSP, 18 nurses worked on this ward in three shifts. Today, there are 31 nurses, six orderlies, and five ward assistants working at Ward 92. By increasing the number of staff, the SMC has effectively lightened the workload of nurses, enabling them to provide better care.

The situation is similar on other wards. Before adopting the INCSP, the SMC had 122 nurses. After adopting the program, the hospital increased its nurses by 110 to 232, in addition to the hiring of 48 orderlies and 32 ward assistants. Whereas three nurses used to work on each shift for every 50 beds, seven nurses are now assigned to the day shift, six for the evening shift, and five for the night shift. The numbers of patients per nurse are thus lower at 7.1 for the day shift, 8.3 for the evening shift, and 10 for the night shift. With an increase in the number of nurses, the hospital has promoted some nurses to more senior positions, providing them with up-to-date occupational training.

Thanks to the increased staff numbers and upgraded work practices, patients and families' satisfaction has greatly improved. As Lee In-deok, head of the Nursing Department at SMC, explained, "Nurses now get frustrated with problems with patient families rather than by an excessive workload Nurses and patients alike nowadays prefer to be left alone without the families getting involved. It has become part of nurses' job here to limit family visit times, so

they don't linger around patients." She also added, "Just as new nurses need time to adapt to their work environment, the INCSP required an adjustment period before it was running as smoothly as it is today."

Lee Bo-ram commented, "Yes, I am still not used to changing patients' diapers, because that was what families used to do after learning from nurses in the past. These days, though, I take a greater pride in my profession by seeing patients get healthy. I enjoy having greater authority over patient care. The INCSP has definitely improved our work environment."

SMC, into its Third Year of INCSP, Reports Significant Decreases in Bedsores and Accidents

June 22, 2016

Reported by Kim Sang-gi.



On June 21, the Seoul Medical Center (SMC) held a symposium entitled “Three Years of the Integrated Nursing and Care Service Program: Sharing the Lessons.”

The symposium featured active and in-depth debates among the experts present on the progress that SMC has made over the past three years with the Integrated Nursing and Care Service Program (INCSP), and on how the nursing system could be improved.

Lee In-deok, head of the Nursing Department at the SMC, delivered a keynote presentation, in which she remarked, “The most noteworthy change achieved by the INCSP is that patients’ satisfaction with the nursing and care services has improved greatly since 2013.” She relayed the findings of a recent satisfaction survey, confirming that “96.6 percent of 2,702 former patients reported satisfaction with the INCSP.”

The SMC further revealed that leaving patients’ care to professional nurses and caretakers has decreased the prevalence of bedsores by 25 percent and reduced patients’ falls from beds by 60 percent.

Patients’ satisfaction with the SMC also improved by 7.2 points to 93.2 percent between 2012 and 2015.

Kim Min-gi, CEO of the SMC, commented, “It is critical to increase the number of professional nurses on staff to ensure the success of the INCSP and improve the overall quality of medical care in Korea. It is equally important to provide nurses with a work

environment where they are in charge and lead services. For the INCSP to provide its benefits for all patients across Korea, the national government needs to provide strong support to make it a sustainable policy program.”

The National Health Insurance Service designated the SMC as an “exemplar” of integrated nursing and care services in May, enabling the hospital to share its experience with other hospitals through hosting delegations’ visits and providing customized consulting.

Less Family Involvement Means Greater Comfort for Patients and Nurses

50% of nurses surveyed confirm that the INCSP has improved their working conditions

Reported by Jeong Seung-won



Since the Seoul Medical Center (SMC) adopted the Integrated Nursing and Care Service Program (INCSP), one out of two of its nurses has found that the conditions in their wards have improved, not only in terms of their work, but also in terms of patient health. The turnover rate among novice nurses has also steadily declined since the program's introduction at the hospital.

The Seoul Metropolitan Government (SMG) designated the SMC for its Patient Reassurance Hospitals Program (PRHP) in 2013. The name of the program has since been changed, first to the Comprehensive Nursing Service Program and now to the INCSP. With the success of the program, the SMC was designated this year as an "exemplar" of integrated nursing and care services for other hospitals to emulate.

The SMC recently held a symposium celebrating the third anniversary of the INCSP and shared its experiences with healthcare experts.

In her speech at the symposium, entitled "Advancements and Current Status of the INCSP," Lee In-deok, head of the hospital's nursing department, introduced the SMC's achievements and successes under the program over the past three years.

Since SMC adopted the program, the number of nurses at the hospital has increased by 156 percent from 122 to 232.

Nurses also enjoy the improvements the program has brought to their work environment. This has meant that the turnover rate among novice nurses, which reached an alarmingly high 46.7 percent in 2013, has been steadily decreasing, first to 31.5 percent in 2014 and to 29 percent in 2015.

The overall turnover rate of nurses rose somewhat from 15.7 percent in 2013 to 17.6 percent in 2014 in the early days of the program. By 2015, however, it had dropped to 12.6 percent.

A survey recently conducted by the hospital found that many nurses identified the improved work environment as the chief benefit of the INCSP.

Of the 191 nurses with at least three years of experience that participated in the survey, 50.5 percent answered that “the greater comfort and peace in the wards due to less family involvement” was the foremost benefit of the INCSP. This is almost double the proportion of nurses, 23.6 percent, that had the same opinion in 2015.

The INCSP has also managed to reduce the average number of hospitalization days across all wards from 11 days to 9.7 days, while increasing patients’ score on the friendliness of the staff from 89.5 percent to 92.7 percent. The average number of hospitalization days for pneumonia patients has also decreased from 16.9 days to 13.8 days.

In the meantime, the bedsore occurrence rate has dropped from 0.8 percent in 2013 to 0.6 percent in 2015, while the ratio of patients falling from their beds has been halved from 1.1 percent in 2014 to 0.5 percent in 2016.

Nurses responding to the survey answered that the severity of their workload was most affected by the critical nature of patients’ conditions, rather than the number of patients they had to care for. Of the 191 nurses, 83 percent answered that the number of patients in critical conditions played a decisive impact on their workload.

Commenting on this, Lee said, “The hospital needs to introduce alternative measures in response to the survey’s findings by re-assigning nurses to patients depending on the levels of severity, by enabling nurses to rely on the help of orderlies and assistants across specializations, and by finding a better way of dealing with patients who refuse to be discharged.”