

Quality management, clinical risk, and accreditation: the role of scientific societies and the specialist nurse

Silvia Scelsi

Presidente ANIARTI

Quality and patient safety currently represent the foundation of the effectiveness of healthcare systems and constitute an indispensable strategic pillar for all healthcare organizations. They are key indicators of the ability to respond to population health needs in an appropriate, safe, and sustainable manner. Within this context, clinical governance emerges as the conceptual framework that integrates clinical accountability, performance evaluation, risk management, continuing professional development, and active engagement of healthcare professionals. It is not merely an organizational model, but rather a cultural approach that requires methodological rigor, advanced competencies, and a systemic vision capable of overcoming the fragmentation of care processes. Within the clinical governance framework, clinical risk management plays a central role. It enables structured analysis of care processes, identification of critical issues, assessment of adverse events and near misses, and the implementation of measurable and evidence-based improvement actions. The Italian regulatory framework has progressively consolidated this approach: Law No. 24/2017 recognized patient safety as an integral component of the right to health and as a shared responsibility between professionals and healthcare organizations, while Legislative Decree No. 502/1992 and Ministerial Decree No. 70/2015 established quality-, transparency-, and appropriateness-oriented standards and accreditation requirements. Accreditation represents a dynamic and continuous process that requires self-assessment capabilities, systematic monitoring, and ongoing improvement. Its effectiveness depends on the ability of healthcare organizations to translate standards into everyday practice, embedding safety into professional behavior. Demonstrating compliance with formal requirements alone is insufficient; a genuine culture of quality and safety must be internalized and supported by continuous education, teamwork, and clinical and professional leadership. In this scenario, the agreements between State and regions have played a significant role in promoting the development of professional competencies and risk management systems, fostering a more integrated and cohesive vision of healthcare quality. Together with institutions, scientific societies and professional associations provide a fundamental contribution, serving as key drivers of cultural, scientific, and methodological advancement. Among these, ANIARTI has long played a pivotal role in promoting research, innovation, and the dissemination of care models grounded in safety, appropriateness, and advanced competencies within critical care settings. Through guidelines, technical documents, recommendations, and

educational initiatives, the association supports the development of evidence-based practices and the growth of an outcomes-oriented quality culture. ANIARTI also acts as a bridge between clinical practice, research, and the healthcare system, fostering integration with other scientific societies and professional associations, both within critical care and in the broader quality domain, such as Choosing Wisely Italy and ASIQuAS. The latter, in particular, has provided significant contributions over the years through standards, methodologies, and evaluation tools, promoting a multidisciplinary and participatory perspective aimed at continuous improvement. Within this cultural ecosystem, the strategic role of the specialist nurse becomes increasingly evident. In line with the FNOPI guidelines on advanced competencies, this professional figure integrates specialized clinical expertise with critical appraisal skills, process analysis, and educational leadership. Specialist nurses actively contribute to the design of care pathways, the conduct of clinical and organizational audits, the dissemination of evidence-based practices, and the management of quality and safety monitoring systems. In high-complexity care settings, their presence enables the connection between operational and organizational dimensions, translating critical issues, data, and performance indicators into concrete improvement strategies. For quality to be real rather than merely declared, healthcare systems must be capable of learning, valuing professional competencies, and developing processes that generate safety. The integrated contribution of clinical governance frameworks, regulatory structures, scientific societies, and advanced nursing competencies currently represents a crucial lever for the development of more reliable, transparent, and outcomes-oriented healthcare services. Building quality means investing in people, their education, and their capacity to collaborate and critically reflect on care practices. It also means equipping organizations with tools capable of transforming data into knowledge and into continuous improvement. Within this process, the specialist nurse emerges as a key resource, capable of combining clinical competence, systemic vision, and professional leadership. This contribution demonstrates how contemporary nursing is not only able to ensure high standards of care, but also to generate quality, sustain innovation, and promote a truly shared culture of safety. Patient safety, before being an organizational objective, thus becomes an ethical and professional value, forming the foundation of a healthcare system oriented toward trust, accountability, and person-centered care.

Correspondence: Silvia Scelsi, Presidente ANIARTI, via Francesco Nullo 6A, 16147 Genova, Italia.

E-mail: presidenza@aniarti.it

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