

## Patient Safety Culture within Hospitals



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Hospitals are the key institutions for health care. They are covering any stage of care, from the ambulance, polyclinic to intensive or palliative care. They are the main institutions for the education of health care professionals. They are essential. That's why patient safety is essential in hospitals.

Patient Safety is tricky. Errors and failures are what we all want to avoid and if they happen there are always two victims, the patient, and the caregiver. A key issue in patient safety (PS) is culture. Culture is how people are behaving when nobody is watching. We normally are silent or ashamed when failures happen. But to err is human. We have to face it, deal with it and learn from it. "You must choose between fear or safety", Don Berwick, 1st Ministerial Summit on Patient Safety, London 2016, is what we all have to achieve. "It can be done".

The central role of PS Culture (PSC) is proven by many scientific studies. Jeffrey Braithwaite et al published in 2017 a major review based on 2049 relevant articles<sup>1</sup>. They found a consistently positive association held between

culture and outcomes across multiple studies, settings, and countries). The OECD published an overview of 24 countries in 2020<sup>2</sup>. 20 of 24 countries surveyed use at least one tool broadly within their health system. 75% of all surveyed countries (18 of 23) indicated that there were plans in their countries to initiate or expand existing work on PSC. The effect in real life was also shown by Tuffolotti et al<sup>3</sup>. Drawing on data from 137 English acute trusts (or hospital systems) for the period 2012-2014, they showed that mortality rates were lower in hospitals that had higher levels of openness among staff members. A one-point increase in the standardized openness score was associated with a 6.48 percent reduction in in-hospital mortality rates.

The tools are mostly based on either the Hospital Survey on Patient Safety Culture of the AHRQ from 2004<sup>4</sup>, the Safety Attitudes Questionnaire of the University of Texas<sup>5</sup>, or the Manchester Patient Safety Framework<sup>6</sup>. The OECD report gives an excellent overview, and by the way, if you ask caregivers, they will admit that organizations based on openness and trust are good places to work, promoting resilience and minimizing burn-out.

PSC is a leadership essential issue and a required role model to be allocated on the top of the hierarchy. To be added; good working conditions are prerequisites for safe care. Safety culture is essential to be able to learn from errors and mistakes. PSC can be taught, and measurement of PSC is good to start with. The results normally enhance activities towards safer and better care<sup>7</sup>.

**Start now, lead the change, and re-discover primary virtues on the systematic ground.**

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