

What about safety culture

What healthcare professionals say about the perceived safety culture in Estonian healthcare institutions in an educational course on patient safety culture

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Introduction

- To improve patient safety outcomes in healthcare settings, it is important to develop a positive patient safety culture.
- "The product of individual and group beliefs, values, attitudes, and patterns of behavior that determine the commitment to, and the style and proficiency of, an organization's health and safety management".
- Different elements that define a safety culture.
- Speaking up about mistakes and learning from these mistakes are important elements of safety culture.



Methods

- Document analyses was applied on an assignment in an online course on Patient Safety Culture.
- Course is part of an educational program on Patient Safety Research developed in the PATSAFE project.
- To get participants into the topic of safety culture, the assignment consisted of two questions:
 - Do you feel comfortable raising concerns regarding patient safety in your workplace?
 - Have you ever tried to go against the prevalent culture of your workplace? What did you learn from it?
- Answers were qualitatively analyzed using thematic analyses.
- Data was anonymized

Objective

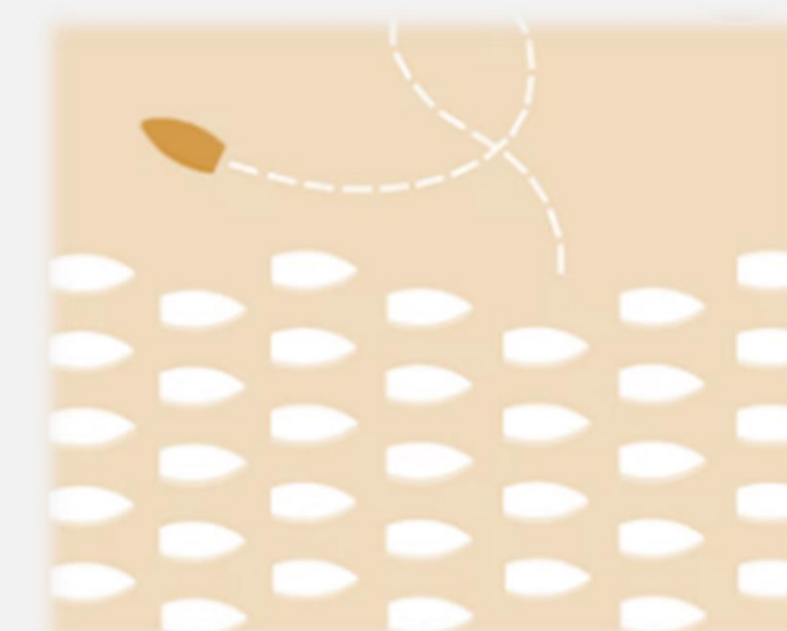
To get insight in how Estonian healthcare professionals feel about speaking up about mistakes and errors in their workplace.

Results

- 23 submissions. Professional backgrounds included: nurse, midwife, physiotherapy (n=11), physician, resident (n=8) and other (n=4)



- The answers on the questions from the assignment showed that there is reluctance on speaking up about mistakes.
- Many answers showed that professionals see it as their duty to be open when things do not go well, they experience it as something that is not common yet.
- Words as 'afraid of repercussions', 'being left out' and 'punishment' were used in the assignment.
- Some answers reflected that especially for younger people it is hard since they seek to claim a place in the department and are being seen as not experienced enough to talk about mistakes.
- Some answers reflected that it is easier to raise concerns to nurses than to doctors and management staff since nurses are more open to feedback.



- Nearly half of the professionals wrote that they have experience with going against the safety culture.
- It helps to find colleagues who support the idea, to accept that change takes time, to start with small things, and to provide solutions to problems instead of only naming the problems.
- Professionals who did not feel the need, were afraid for being punished for it, or experience that department heads are denying that change is needed.
- A lot of professionals describe the healthcare setting as conservative in being innovative and open for change.
- Patient safety is not yet a priority in many Estonian healthcare institutions.

Conclusion

- Based on the course assignment it seems not yet common to speak up about mistakes in Estonian healthcare settings.
- The hierarchical structures seem to play an important role.
- There seem to be more a culture of blaming than a culture of learning.
- There seem to be some starting points that provide a useful basis to improve safety culture.
- These results are based on a small number of experiences, more research on this topic is suggested.

