

The hospital survey on patient safety culture in the hospitals of South Bohemia Region

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Introduction

Patient safety is an important component of health care quality. Patient safety, including the measurement of patient safety culture is a top priority in developed countries today [1]. Nieva & Sorra [2] defined patient safety culture as the product of individual and group values, attitudes, perceptions, competencies, and patterns of behavior that determine the commitment to, and the style and proficiency of, an organization's safety management. An organization with a 'safety culture' is open and fair with staff when incidents occur, learns from mistakes, and rather than blaming individuals, looks at what went wrong in the system [3].

The Hospital Survey on Patient Safety Culture (HSOPSC) of AHRQ [4] is a tool for assessing the safety culture of hospitals or for specific units within the hospitals. HSOPSC has been used in different countries and has been translated into different languages.

The main objective of this research was to use the HSOPSC measurement tool to evaluate the current patient safety culture in the South Bohemian acute hospitals by using the Czech version of this questionnaire.

Material and Methods

We used the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) Hospital Survey on Patient Safety Culture (HSOPSC), a validated instrument that has 12 safety culture dimensions and 2 outcome measures.

It contains 42 items which mostly use the 5-point Likert response scale of agreement ("Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree") or frequency ("Never" to "Always"). The outcome measures use single-item responses about the number of events reported (defined as errors of any type, regardless of whether they result in patient harm) and the overall patient safety grade ("Excellent" to "Failing").

The participating hospitals included 7 acute care general hospitals in South Bohemia region (six district hospitals and one regional hospital). Bed size numbers of these hospitals varied from 173 to 1,585 beds (two hospitals <300, three hospitals 300-500, one hospital >500 beds and one hospital >1000 beds). The Czech version of the HSOPS (questionnaire) was distributed over the period from April to June 2011 to randomly selected healthcare workers through the managers of nursing. Additionally, the survey was conducted anonymously.

The total number of questionnaires distributed was 450. In total, 398 respondents had successfully completed the questionnaire. The final response rate for the survey was 88.4 %.

Results and Discussion

To our knowledge, this study is the first of its kind to systematically investigate the current state of patient safety culture in Czech hospitals. The dimensions with the highest positive ratings were hospital handoffs and transitions, supervisor/manager expectations and actions promoting patient safety, and overall perceptions of patient safety, while those with lowest ratings included hospital management support for patient safety, teamwork across hospital units, staffing and non-punitive response to error (CHART 1). Approximately 34.2 % of respondents reported not completing any event reports in the past 12 months (CHART 2) and 66.2 % gave their hospitals an 'excellent/very good' patient safety grade (CHART 3).

49 % respondents reported difficulty working with staff from other units and admitted that major problems occur in the exchange of information across units. Communication within and across hospital units is critical in a healthcare environment as the patient is usually treated by several healthcare specialists in multiple settings [5]. Evidence has shown that communication problems are major contributors to adverse events [6, 7]. 48 % of respondents voiced concerns about understaffing and high workloads. In addition to being overworked, medical personnel in under-staffed hospitals are often faced with stress, anxiety and depression which increase the risks of incidents [8]. Therefore, Czech hospitals can benefit from strategies to improve working conditions are required to assist health professionals in avoiding errors and ensuring patient safety.

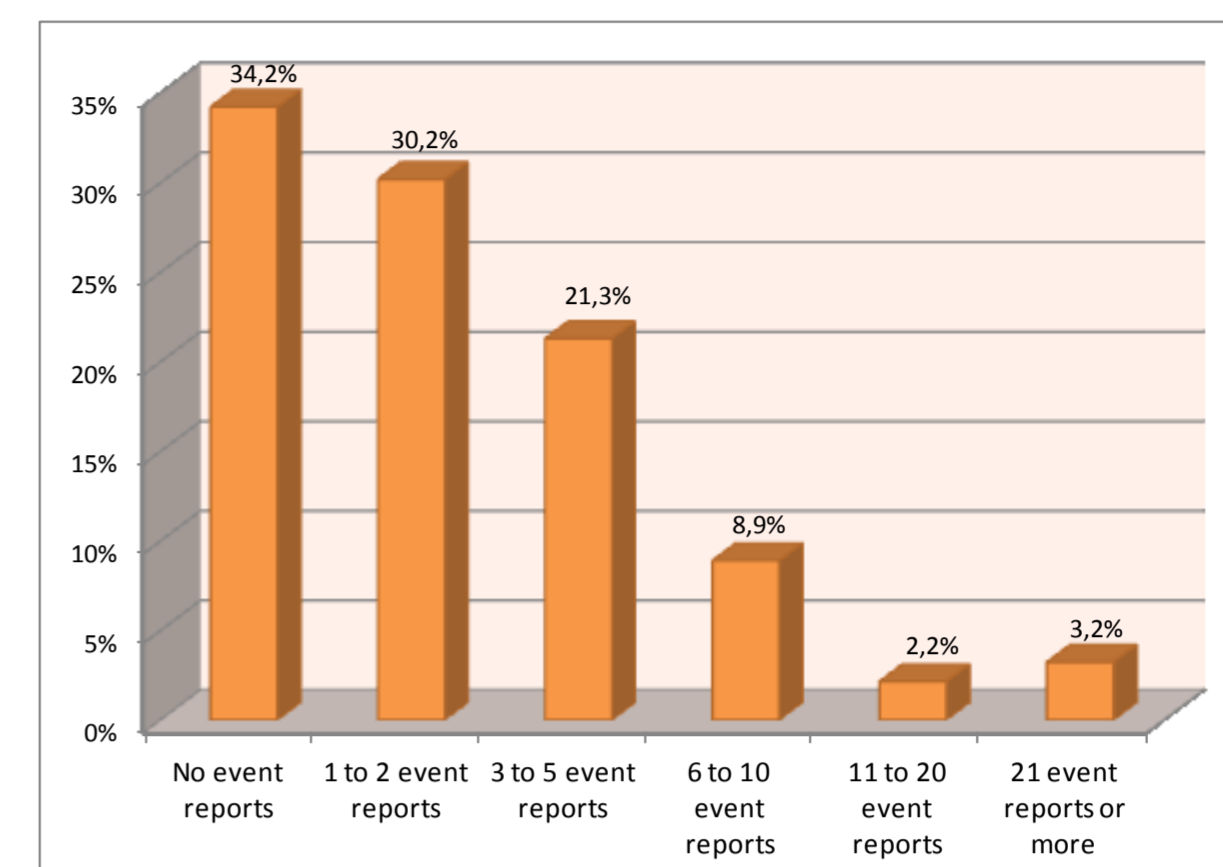


Chart 2. Number of Events Reported

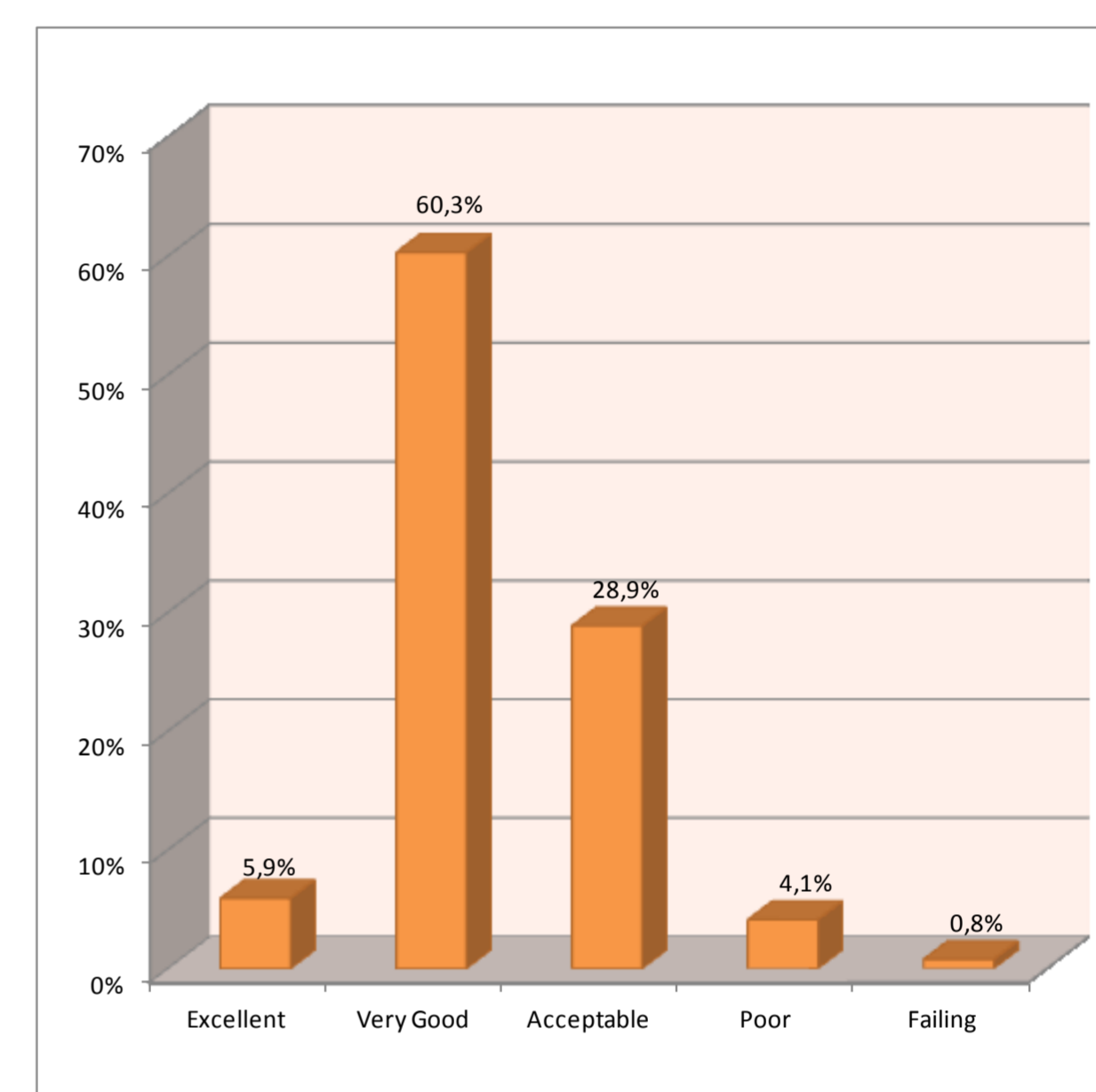


Chart 3. Patient Safety Grade

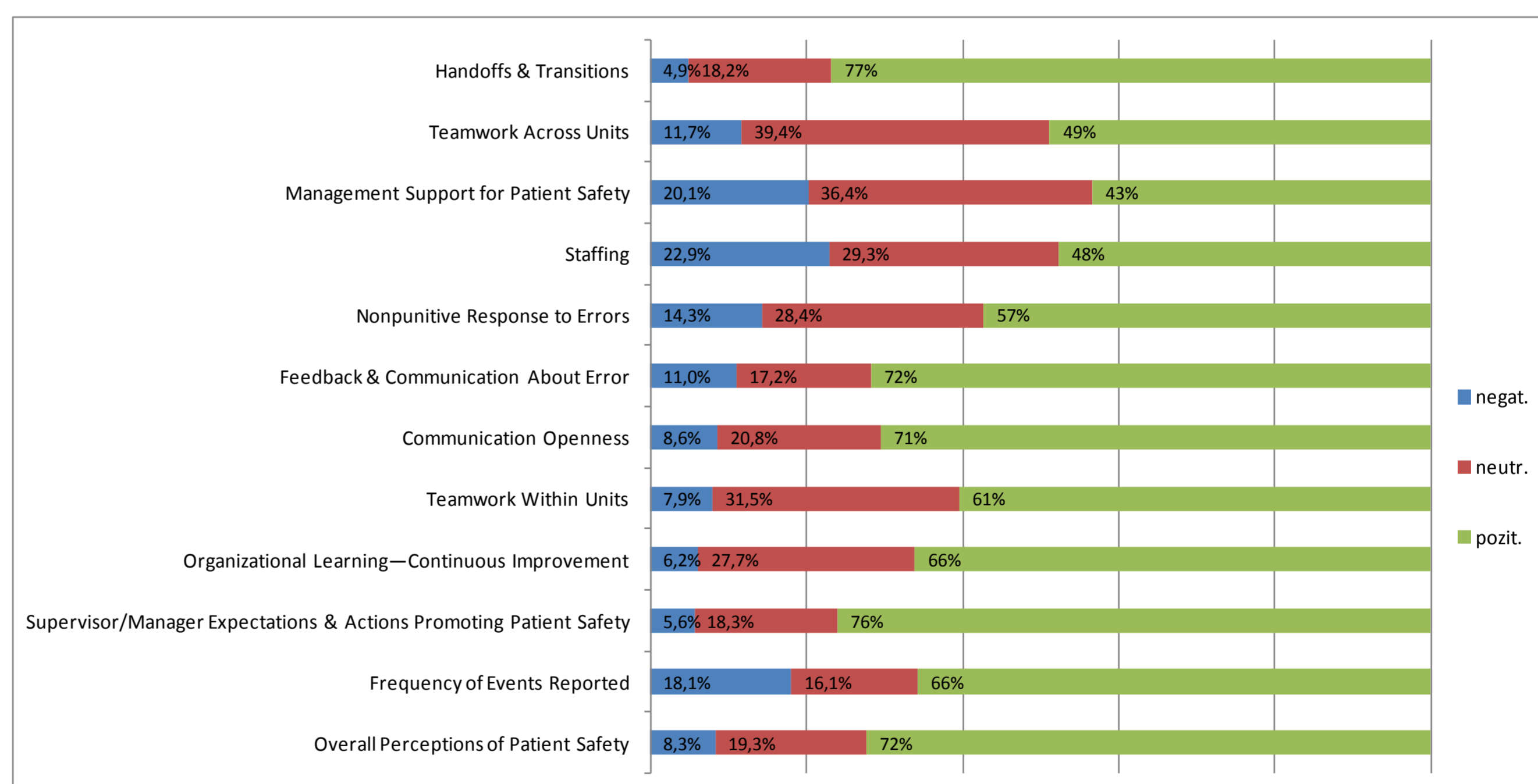


Chart 1. Average percentage of overall responses to each dimension

Conclusions

The results demonstrated that amongst the health care workers surveyed in South Bohemia there was a positive attitude towards patient safety culture in their organizations. Patient safety should be a top strategic priority for policy makers, managers, leaders and frontline staff. In order to promote patient safety practices, managers of all healthcare organizations in Czech Republic should invest in assessing patient safety culture in their healthcare organizations.

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