

Title

Empowering Voices: Implementing the 'Speak Up for Safety & Professionalism Program' in hospitals

Timeslot

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Presenting author

Jane Graham

Full author list

Jane Graham, A/Prof David Lim, Dr Kate Churruca, A/Prof Deborah Debono.

Abstract

Empowering Voices: Implementing the 'Speak Up for Safety & Professionalism Program' in hospitals:
A case study

Background

Speaking up when an error is about to occur can prevent patient harm, yet many staff report not feeling comfortable speaking up when they know unintended harm may be about to occur (Care Quality Commission 2023; Umoren et al., 2022). Calvary Health Care ("Calvary"), an Australian-wide, not-for-profit, faith-based organisation providing health, aged and disability services in hospitals, residential aged care facilities, and home care environments,

implemented a two-pronged program aimed at culture change through supporting staff to speak up when they identify the potential occurrence of unintended harm or unprofessional behaviours that impact the culture of safety. The Speak Up for Safety and Professionalism Program ("SUFSP") consists of two evidence-based, complementary initiatives that were implemented across its 13 hospitals over a five-year period. These were the Cognitive Institute Speaking Up for Safety™ graded assertiveness training model followed by the Promoting Professional Accountability initiative.

Aims

To evaluate and share Calvary's experience in engaging with an external education provider in tailoring and implementing a culture change program to support staff to speak up when they identify the potential occurrence of unintended harm or unprofessional behaviours impacting safety; the Speak Up for Safety and Professionalism program's impact and lessons learnt along the way.

Methods

A range of data sources were used to evaluate Calvary's experience and understand the program's impact, including: pre and post training surveys, workshop evaluations, the content of incident reports, anecdotes from the frontlines, annual employee engagement surveys incorporating speaking up related questions, incident rate trends and number of zero tolerance events. Calvary

developed and validated a survey tool to measure the effectiveness of the training and behaviour change, with the survey open to all staff and Visiting Medical Officers to complete in October 2024. The data is currently being analysed and the findings will be included in this presentation.

Results

The Speaking Up for Safety™ organisational-wide training rates averaged 72% (range 60% - 95% across sites). There is evidence that the approach and language of speaking up are being used through storytelling and within incident reports. There has been a trend of increased annual incident reporting since the introduction of the training. Employee's self-reported confidence to speak up and speaking up behaviours have improved steadily in the annual staff engagement survey over the past four years. In terms of the Promoting Professional Accountability initiative, staff from more than half of the hospitals are using the online feedback system that supports speaking up about behaviours that impact safety.

Implications for practice

Implementing an externally developed safety program across diverse and multiple sites could benefit from a practice lab approach especially in embedding and sustaining the change within and across the organisation. Having top-down and bottom-up support, and focus on creating value from the change are essential to sustaining change. There are challenges in understanding and measuring the impact of speaking up programs e.g., incident reporting rates increasing can mean a number of things. Culture change can take time to see impact and so this specific program will receive ongoing evaluation.

References

Care Quality Commission: Rapid Literature Review: Safety Culture: Final Report April 2023

<https://www.cqc.org.uk/about-us/transparency/external-reports-research/rapid-literature-review-safety-cultures>

Umoren R, Kim S, Gray MM, et al. (2022), Interprofessional model on speaking up behaviour in healthcare professionals: a qualitative study. *BMJ Leader* 6:15–19.