

Background

Healthcare today is characterized by continuous change to improve quality of care and patient safety [1]. Improvement projects need to have complex and multi-faceted interventions that are developed iteratively, like the PDSA-cycle, in response to obstacles and unintended effects [2]. Despite the strong growth of various quality improvement (QI) initiatives, there is however limited knowledge about the efficacy of this QI programs [3, 4]. The diffuse results that are found may be explained by contextual differences in which these initiatives were implemented [4].

Aim(s)

This qualitative research study aimed to investigate the perspectives of nurses and nurse managers working in acute care hospitals regarding the contextual factors and skills that influence the effective utilization of PDSA-based QI at the microsystem level.

Methods

Semi-structured focus groups and interviews with nurses (managers) were organized to explore there perspectives about QI. A thematic analysis was performed with themes inductively emerging from the data.

Results

Nurses (managers) indicate the importance of contextual factors and skills which varies in each stage of the PDSA-cycle. First of all the type of trigger for the project can have a great impact on the motivation and outcomes. Clear (organizational) vision and goals can feed this triggers and motivation. During project execution, involvement, empowerment and decision latitude of the team, leadership skills, peer-to-peer feedback and insights in the PDSA-cycle are facilitators for QI. Additionally, the support of management, collaboration with physicians, availability of data infrastructure, and collaboration with quality experts can facilitate QI. On the other hand, limited financial support and resource availability were identified as major barriers.

Discussion

Motivation of clinical microsystems for QI projects is crucial and the impact of triggers for improvement on this motivation is an important insight [5]. The support of management and strategy deployment is crucial to feed the QI journey. Peer feedback is mentioned in recent research as a game changer and was also stated as facilitator by nurses (managers) [6]. Recent focus on nurse involvement, clinical leadership, empowerment and decision latitude tends to have an positive impact [7, 8].

Implications and future perspectives

The identified contextual factors and skills can provide valuable insight to managers and organizations in in establishing an optimal environment for quality improvement (QI) at the microsystem level. Future research should aim to quantify the impact of these factors on the QI culture and effectiveness of PDSA-based projects.

References

1. Aubry, M., et al., 42: 60-77, 2011.
2. Taylor, M.J., et al., 23: 290-298, 2014.
3. Dixon-Woods, M., et al., 21: 876-884, 2012.
4. Kaplan, H.C., et al., 88: 500-559, 2010.
5. Kaplan, H.C., et al., 21: 13-20, 2012
6. LeClair-Smith, C., et al., 46: 321-328, 2016.
7. Boamah, S.A., 75: 1000-1009, 2019.
8. Patrick, A., et al., 19: 449-460, 2011.