



Singapore Healthcare Management 2018

Every Voice Matters, Speak Up for Safety and Make It Safe to Speak

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Introduction

'Speaking up' is defined as the raising of concerns by health care professionals for the benefit of patient safety and care quality upon recognising of the risky or deficient actions of others within health care teams in a hospital environment. Joint Commission predicted that 80% of the serious safety events occur due to miscommunications among healthcare professionals. Speaking up is one of the critical behaviors of patient safety that displays an important role for improving quality and patient safety in healthcare. Speaking up is expected to have an immediate preventive effect on human errors or to improve technical and system deficiencies, however health care professionals often hesitate to voice concerns due to fear of retribution or being ridiculed or hurting relationship.

Aim

When it's safe to Speak Up, everyone benefits therefore is important to promote and create an environment where employees at all levels feel equally comfortable stopping each other when observing an unsafe behavior or recognising of the risky or deficient actions of a colleague. Every voice matters, KKH aims to achieve culture change by increasing the ease and motivation for staff to "speak up for safety" and have it embed as part of our daily practice to achieve Zero Harm by 2022.

Methodology

Leadership Commitment

Strong leadership commitment and support form the foundation to effect culture change which is vital to enhance the speaking-up behavior of health care professionals. Speaking Up for Safety was officially launched on February 2016'



Speaking Up Using Safety C.O.D.E

Perception of lack of sufficient knowledge is a barrier to speaking up, KKH uses Safety C.O.D.E.™ (Checks, Options, Demands, Elevates) a Cognitive Institute's Speaking Up for Safety (SUFs) program. The objective is to equip staff with the ability to use assertive and critical language, to influence on self-confidence and speaking-up behavior.



SUFs training was started in January 2017 with the training of Hospital Executives and Medical Board members first, subsequently rolled out to all employees (staff strength of 5821) including outsource and volunteers. Within a year, the Patient Safety Champions conducted a total 275 sessions with staff completion rate at 96%. SUFs is made as core training for medical trainees (HOs/MOs) and new employees.

Messaging – Make Speaking Up for Safety Stick

Training can help staff understand the intention of speaking up isn't to criticize but a group effort watch each other's back; as such message is reinforced by leaders via Speak Up for Safety Video which was jointly produced by the office of Quality Safety and Risk Management and Corporate Communications.

Speak Up for Safety - YouTube



Create a Psychologically Safe Environment, Make It Safe to Speak

The attitude of people can have a strong impact on speaking up behavior whether negative or positive. Staff feedback was sought during monthly Leadership Rounding, Safety Walkabout, and Departmental Meetings on challenges faced in speaking up. KKH's leaders acknowledged training itself would not lead to change behavior, thus second video was produced to reinforce the importance of listening up and to respond positively when someone spoke up even the person who may be wrong. Both videos are made available via in-house media portal and shared publicly in YouTube.

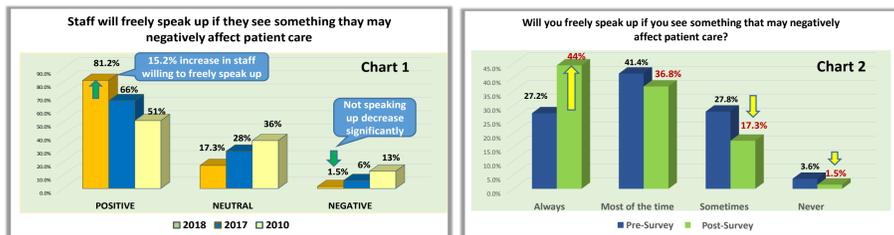
Leaders Walk the Talk and Walk the Walk

Promote a psychological safe environment to help the staff to feel comfortable speaking up their concerns for safety has to start from the leaders, upholding the organization values to lead others to align with the mission set. Additionally the consistent messaging via various portals to coach our employees make safe behaviors choices.



Results

- AHRQ17 results (Jan-Mar 2017-94.3% staff participation rate) and staff willingness to speak up freely has positive response rate of 66% (refer Chart 1)
- SUFs was initiated on Jan2017 to Mar2018 and a post-SUFs survey done between Apr to May 2017 with staff participation rate of 50%, the survey result shown staff willingness to speak up freely gone up to 81.2%
- Within a year of implementation, staff willingness to speak up for safety reaped a significant improvement (refer to Pre & Post SUFs survey results in Chart 2).



A change in speaking up for safety culture was noted and the following were 2 of the success stories where harm was averted:

Our Success Stories

- A Patient Care Assistant (PCA) noted that a female patient was drowsy and more sleepy than usual during peri-operative checks for a hysterectomy dilation and curettage. The patient's last blood pressure reading was above the normal range as well.
- The PCA spoke up and shared her concerns with the ward nurse, who assured her that the patient was alright. In addition, the patient's ECG result was normal.
- PCA again raised her concern and spoke up to the nurse-in-charge; she requested for a doctor to assess the patient's condition.
- Two doctors assessed the patient. They agreed that the patient was not fit to undergo her scheduled hysterectomy dilation and curettage.
- In view of the patient's symptoms, a CT scan of the head was performed and results showed a blood clot in the patient's brain.
- The patient was immediately referred to the National Neuroscience Institute for further medical management.
- Speaking up and great teamwork helped save a patient from deteriorating and prevented serious harm.

Conclusion

Group CEO Message to all SingHealth Citizens

"We work as teams and it is each team member's responsibility to ensure patient safety. No staff should feel less empowered to speak up against lax practices or highlight potential harm. We cannot tolerate any instances of power imbalance. If you are facing difficulty raising such issues to your superiors, please do not hesitate to write to your institution heads or myself. We are committed to cultivating the right attitude and mind-set when it comes to raising the alarm. No issue is too small when it comes to keeping our patients safe!"

Prof Ivy Ng, GCEO, Jan 2016

A patient seeking your voice to speak up



A Senior Consultant listen, respond and thank

A senior consultant highlight two cases of speaking up for safety that he have observed on 23 April 2018:

- I want to compliment and acknowledge our AU nurse Yu's effort to speak up for safety the other day. I injected medication into a patient's IV port without first swapping with alcohol swap she came up to me, politely told me that I forgot to do so, and said she has helped me by swapping the port later. I thanked her for reminding me and also offering in helping to close the loop for patient's safety.
- Last night while on call, a nurse called me (at 1am) to ask if the PCA dilution of 64mg of morphine for a 32 kg child is correct. I realised that she forgot that the PCA was in a 300 mcg cartridge (and not 50mcg as was normal for ward infusion dilutions). She felt apologetic after that. Nonetheless, I thanks her for speaking up for safety, but educated her that the amount is 2x due to bigger cartridge volume.

We want to continue to encourage speaking up and we can do so by listening and reacting appropriately (by always thanking first)

Regards,
Dr. Stow Yew Nam
Senior Consultant

Creating an environment where everyone at all levels feel equally comfortable stopping each other when observing an unsafe behavior is the foundation for building a strong safety culture.