A longitudinal study of Hospital Survey in Patient Safety Culture over the past eight years

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Introduction
Patient safety is the top priority in the New Territories West Cluster (NTWC). Achieving a culture of patient safety requires an understanding of the values and beliefs of the staff and what behaviors related to patient safety are supported and expected. In this regard, NTWC Quality and Safety Division had conducted 4 biannual Staff Surveys on Patient Safety Culture over the past 8 years.

Objectives
To study the changes of staff’s perception on patient safety; to understand the knowledge and practice of staff on patient safety over the years; and to identify directions for improvement.

Methodology
NTWC had adopted the questionnaire of ‘Hospital Survey on Patient Safety Culture’ that developed by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ). The NTWC survey contained 30 questions in 2008 and the number of questions was increased to 39 in 2014 to cover more aspects. The surveys covered four main composites, including knowledge and attitudes on incidents reporting, management support in patient safety, practices and perception on patient safety, and participants’ demography. Surveys were distributed in both paper and electronic formats. The results of the 4 surveys between 2008 and 2014 were compared and analyzed. Among the 4 surveys, 45-64% of respondents had a working experience of 10 years or more and 39-84% were from nursing professions.

Result
In summary, staff members are getting more comfortable in reporting incidents to
hospital management (from 66% in 2008 to 97% in 2014). They also acknowledged the hospital management had set patient safety as a top priority (increased from 69% to 95% over the eight years). Besides, staff are feeling more comfortable (44% to 61%) to "speak up" if they see something negatively affecting patient care and in exercising “time out” before performing invasive procedures (from 38 in 2008 to 63% in 2014). However, there were slight decreasing trends for applying some patient safety practices in daily work such as “Read Back” and “SBAR”. The overall patient safety perception scores were moving between 6.2 to 6.8 (out of 10) in NWTC, while the international average reference score was around 7.6. In conclusion, the biannual conduct of the Survey provided hospital management a good overview of patient safety culture development and the directions for improvements.