



What is QUASER?

QUASER (Quality and Safety in European Hospitals) is a three year project funded by FP7 investigating the relationships between organisational and cultural factors and quality in European hospitals. We are interested in three dimensions of quality – clinical effectiveness, patient safety and patient experience. A key feature of the study is the multi level perspective used to understand influences on hospital quality at the macro, meso and micro levels, and the interactions between these levels. The overall aim is to design and disseminate an evidence based guide for hospitals to implement quality improvements and a framework for payers to assess hospital quality.

Who is involved?

The director of the project is Professor Naomi Fulop, Professor of Health and Health Policy at King's College London. The project consortium comprises leading healthcare researchers from five countries. Each partner leads one or more work packages, with a team of researchers and advisers from the wider project group contributing to the work:-

- ★ **King's Patient Safety and Service Quality Research Centre (King's PSSQ), UK.** Work package leaders: Professor Glenn Robert, Dr Janet Anderson
- ★ **Imperial Centre for Patient Safety and Service Quality (CPSSQ), UK.** Work package leaders: Professor Charles Vincent, Susan Burnett
- ★ **Department of Health Studies, University of Stavanger, Norway.** Work package leader: Professor Karina Aase
- ★ **Department of Health Policy & Management, Erasmus University, Netherlands.** Work package leaders: Professor Roland Bal, Anne Marie Weggelaar
- ★ **The Jönköping Academy for Improvement of Health and Welfare, Jönköping University, Sweden.** Work package leaders: Professor Boel Andersson-Gare, Professor Johan Calltorp
- ★ **Instituto Superior de Ciências do Trabalho e da Empresa (ISCTE), Portugal.** Work package leaders: Professor Francisco Nunes

What progress has been made so far?

First Stakeholder workshop

A series of three stakeholder workshops will be held during the project to test findings with a wider group of countries than those in which the research is being carried out. The first of these was held in April 2011 in Amsterdam, when a group of senior clinicians, managers and payers from Estonia, Spain, Turkey, Norway, the Netherlands, Denmark, England, Portugal, Sweden and Taiwan met with the research team.

In this workshop we aimed to learn about the external influences on quality and quality improvement in hospitals including national and regional government, associated organisations and payers and insurers. We also explored how participants receive guidance for improving the quality of care, and available resources for learning about quality improvement, to help inform the production and dissemination of our guides.

Small group discussions were guided by the following questions:

- The status of quality improvement at a national level - how is it organised, who takes the lead?
- The regulation of quality and safety - are there minimum standards for quality, are hospitals required to have quality improvement programmes, do hospitals set their own standards?
- How do payers evaluate hospital quality? Do they set standards?
- What data are available to assess the quality of care in different hospitals?
- How is good practice disseminated? How do managers and clinicians learn about quality? Are guides to implementing quality improvement available, who produces them, what are the attitudes towards guides?
- Recommendations for formulating a guide to improving quality and safety for both hospital managers and payer organisations.
- Recommendations for disseminating good practice from the QUASER research.

The discussion was helpful in illuminating the historical, cultural and structural influences that have shaped the healthcare system in different countries, and there were many practical suggestions that will directly inform the development of the Guide and the Framework that will be produced by the research.

The next stakeholder workshop is planned for mid 2012 when we expect fieldwork to be completed, and we welcome inquiries from senior clinicians, managers and payers who might be interested in participating.

Expert Advisory Board Meeting

Our first EAB meeting was held in September in London. Board members include:-

- ★ **Professor Rene Amalberti**; Haute Autorité de Santé (HAS)
- ★ **Dr Marc Berg**; Plexus Medical Group
- ★ **Dr Geir Sverre Braut**; Norwegian Board of Health Supervision
- ★ **Dr Pascal Garel**; HOPE European Hospital and Healthcare Federation
- ★ **Elisabeth Jelfs**; European Health Management Association
- ★ **Professor Sasa Markovic**; University Medical Centre, Ljubljana (Standing Committee of European Doctors (CPME) representative)
- ★ **Professor Lorna McKee**; University of Aberdeen
- ★ **Dr Peter Mendel**; RAND Corporation
- ★ **Mrs Margaret Murphy**; External Lead, WHO Patients for Patient Safety
- ★ **Professor John Ovretveit**; Karolinska Institute

The Board members attending reviewed outputs from the project and were updated on progress by the work package leaders. They provided valuable insights, advice on particular questions, and gave positive feedback about the value of the work and the direction taken by the research team. The next EAB meeting will be held in autumn 2012.

Fieldwork

Data collection in hospitals is progressing well. Hospital selection is complete and meso level fieldwork in all countries has commenced. Researchers are interviewing key informants in the hospitals about quality and quality improvement and have begun observing meetings and committees. Selection of micro systems to be studied in more detail is almost completed in all countries, and in-depth micro system fieldwork will begin soon. In addition, an ongoing quality improvement project has been identified in each hospital and will be studied longitudinally to trace the various influences on how such projects are undertaken and to observe the dynamics and interactions.

Each country has also completed a report describing the macro level context of healthcare in their country. These contain detail about nine dimensions of the healthcare system – country context, funding and access, regulatory framework for quality, accreditation and monitoring,

information availability, resources available for quality and patient rights.

Researchers' meetings

In June 2011 the whole consortium met in Jonkoping, Sweden to review progress and ensure that the approach taken to fieldwork was, where possible, standardised across countries. Differences in healthcare structure and context posed challenges for the team in identifying who to approach for information, the documents to analyse and the key meetings to observe. Careful definition was required to ensure a common approach to fieldwork.



Team members in Jonkoping

The consortium met again in London in September. Each country team had completed interviews in at least one hospital and analysed the data using a proposed analytic framework. The purpose of the meeting was to review the analysis process and agree a standardised approach so that results in each country are comparable. The team made significant progress towards this goal, as well as reviewing and agreeing all other aspects of the project.



The team at Somerset House, central London

Outputs

Journals

Robert, G., Anderson, J., Burnett, S., Aase, K., Andersson-Gare, B., Bal, R., Calltorp J., Nunes, F., Weggelaar, A., Vincent C., Fulop, N., & QUASER team. A longitudinal, multi-level comparative study of quality and safety in European hospitals: the QUASER study protocol. **BMC Health Services Research** 2011, 11:285.

Conference presentations

Fulop, N. The road less travelled: The story of an FP7 project – Studying Quality and Safety in European Hospitals (QUASER). Presented at the **Service Delivery and Organisation (SDO) Network and Health Services Research (HSR) Network's** fourth joint annual conference, 7-8 June 2011 in Liverpool, UK.

Gomes, S. The QUASER project. Poster presented at the **First International Meeting on Quality and Patient Safety** held 27-28 May 2011, in Lisbon, Portugal.

Gomes, S., Fernandes, A., Martins, L., & Nunes, F. QUASER Project: Quality and Safety in European Union Hospitals. Presented at the **Fórum Excelência**, held 27-29 June 2011 in Lisbon, Portugal.

Gomes, S., Fernandes, A., Martins, L., & Nunes, F. Quality management in hospitals: Logic of adoption and implementation of QI programmes. Presented at the **Fórum Excelência**, held 27-29 June 2011 in Lisbon, Portugal.

Groene, O., Fulop, N., & Sunol, R. Research into the effectiveness of European quality improvement systems: Approaches, evidence and current issues. Workshop proposal accepted for **BMJ Forum for Quality and Safety in Health Care to be held** 17-20 April 2012 in Paris, France.

Weggelaar, A. Learn to improve, improved learning. Presented at the **Academy of Management, Division of Health Care Management workshop**, held 7 August, 2010 in Montreal, Canada.

Wiig, S., Aase, K., Eriksen, K., Gjesten, M., Solheim, M., Harthug, S., Fulop, N., & Robert, G. Using patient experiences in improving quality and safety in health care: Governmental expectations and hospital practices. To appear in Proceedings of the joint conference of **Probability Safety Assessment and Management and European Safety and Reliability (PSAM11 & ESREL)** 2012. *To be held* 25-29 June 2012, Helsinki, Finland.

Wiig, S., Aase, K., Pietikainen, E., Reiman, T., Macchi, L., Anderson, J., & Robert, G. Studying quality and safety in hospitals by using different theoretical frameworks – what's the difference? To appear in Proceedings of the joint conference of **Probability Safety Assessment and Management and European Safety and Reliability (PSAM11 & ESREL)** 2012. *To be held* 25-29 June 2012, Helsinki, Finland.

Wiig, S., Harthug, S., von Plessen, C., & Burnett, S. Measuring quality and safety in Norwegian health care - time for a change? Presented at **Healthcare Systems Ergonomics and Patient Safety**, June 22-24 2011. Oviedo Spain. In Albolino, S., Bagnare, S., Bellandi, T.,

Llaneza, J., Rosal, G., & Tartaglia, R. (eds.) (2011). *Healthcare Systems Ergonomics and Patient Safety 2011 – an alliance between professionals and citizens for patient safety and quality of life*. CRC Press, Taylor & Francis Group, London, UK.

Wiig, S., Quartz, J., von Plessen, C., & Harthug, S. Organizing for quality and safety in health care - the Norwegian case. Presented at the **European Safety and Reliability (ESREL) conference**, 18-22 September 2011, Troyes, France.

Upcoming conferences of interest

Organisational Behaviour in Healthcare
15-18 April 2012; Dublin, Ireland.
<http://shoc.org.uk/>

BMJ Forum for Quality and Safety in Health Care
17-20 April 2012; Paris.
<http://internationalforum.bmj.com/2012-forum>

Patient Safety congress
29-30 May 2012; Birmingham, UK.
<http://www.patientsafetycongress.co.uk/>

PSAM and ESREL
25-29 June 2012; Helsinki, Finland.
<https://www.psam11.org/www/fi/index.php>

European Group for Organizational Studies (EGOS)
2-7 July 2012; Helsinki, Finland.
<http://www.egos2012.net/>

ISQua's 29th International Conference
21-24 October 2012; Geneva, Switzerland.
<http://www.isquaconference.org/>

Paper of interest

- ★ Charles, K., McKee, L., McCann, S. (2011). A quest for patient-safe culture: Contextual influences on patient safety performance. *Journal of Health Services Research and Policy*, 16, DOI: 10.1258/jhsrp.2011.010093.

This paper investigated the broader contextual influences on patient safety and staff well being in eight hospital trusts in England. The authors developed taxonomy of the contextual factors that influence patient safety, including – environmental shocks, cultural characteristics, processes and structures supportive of patient safety and trust leadership style. A typology of trusts was proposed – resilient, adaptive, conservative and in recovery. This fascinating study provides evidence of the effects of the environment – external and internal - on patient safety and concludes with recommendations for hospital managers to assess and anticipate changes in the internal and external context of the organisation.

Find out more - www.quaserproject.eu