



Quality and Safety in European Union Hospitals (QUASER):

*A Research-based Guide for Implementing Best Practice
and a Framework for Assessing Performance*

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Features of the study

The QUASER study has four major features:

- a multi-level (macro, meso and micro-system), longitudinal comparative study of the 'quality of hospital care' in each of the five partner countries
- our definition of 'quality of hospital care' for the purposes of this project will comprise three components: clinical effectiveness, patient safety and patient experience
- our conceptualisation of quality as both a human, social and organisational accomplishment (as well as a technical one)
- an emphasis on translational research that is evidence-based and that will provide strategic and practical guidance for hospital practitioners and health care policy makers in the EU in their efforts to continuously improve hospital quality and safety standards.

Research design and conceptual framework

There is already a good understanding of the types of quality improvement efforts that are undertaken in healthcare, but less understanding of the organisational and cultural processes that determine the effectiveness of these methods. In this study we will examine the relationship between organisational processes and quality from a multi-level perspective incorporating the macro (national healthcare system), meso (hospital) and micro (frontline clinical team) levels. The study will retain a particular focus on the dynamics and interactions between these different levels as possible key determinants of sustained quality of hospital care (see figure 1).

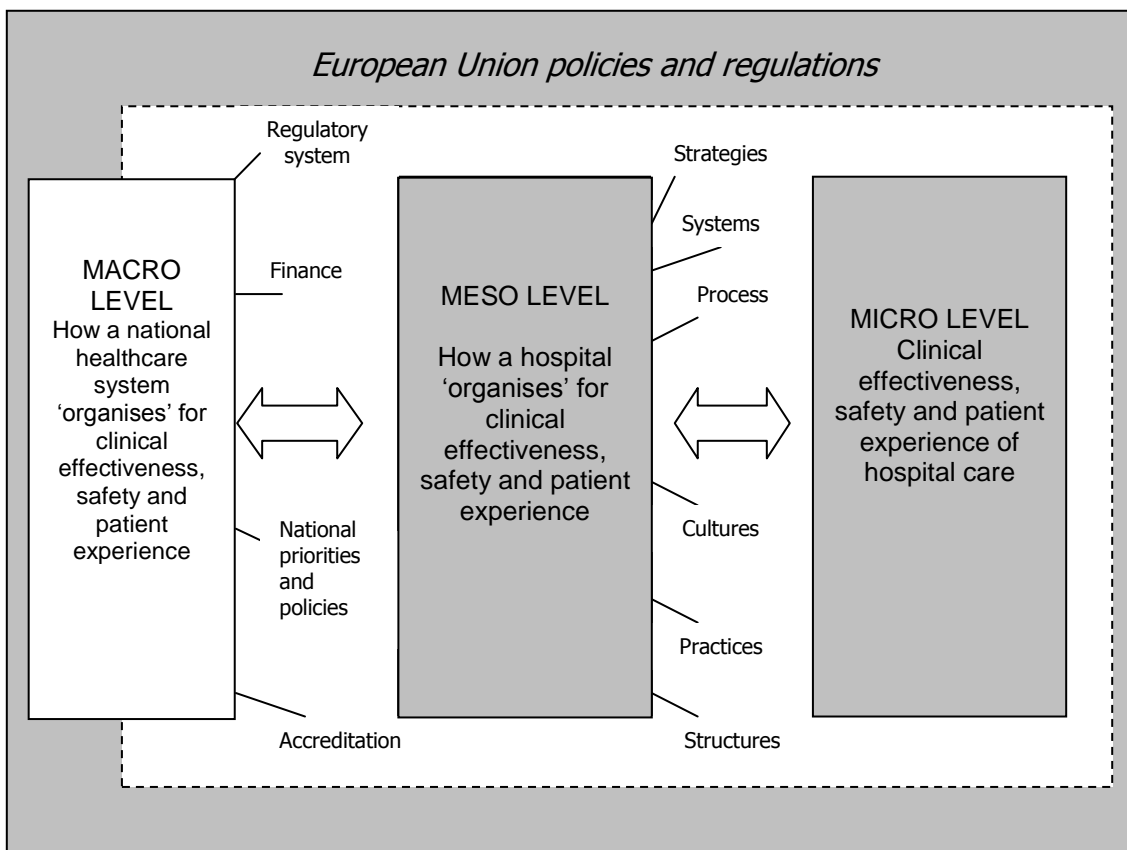


Figure 1: A multi level perspective.

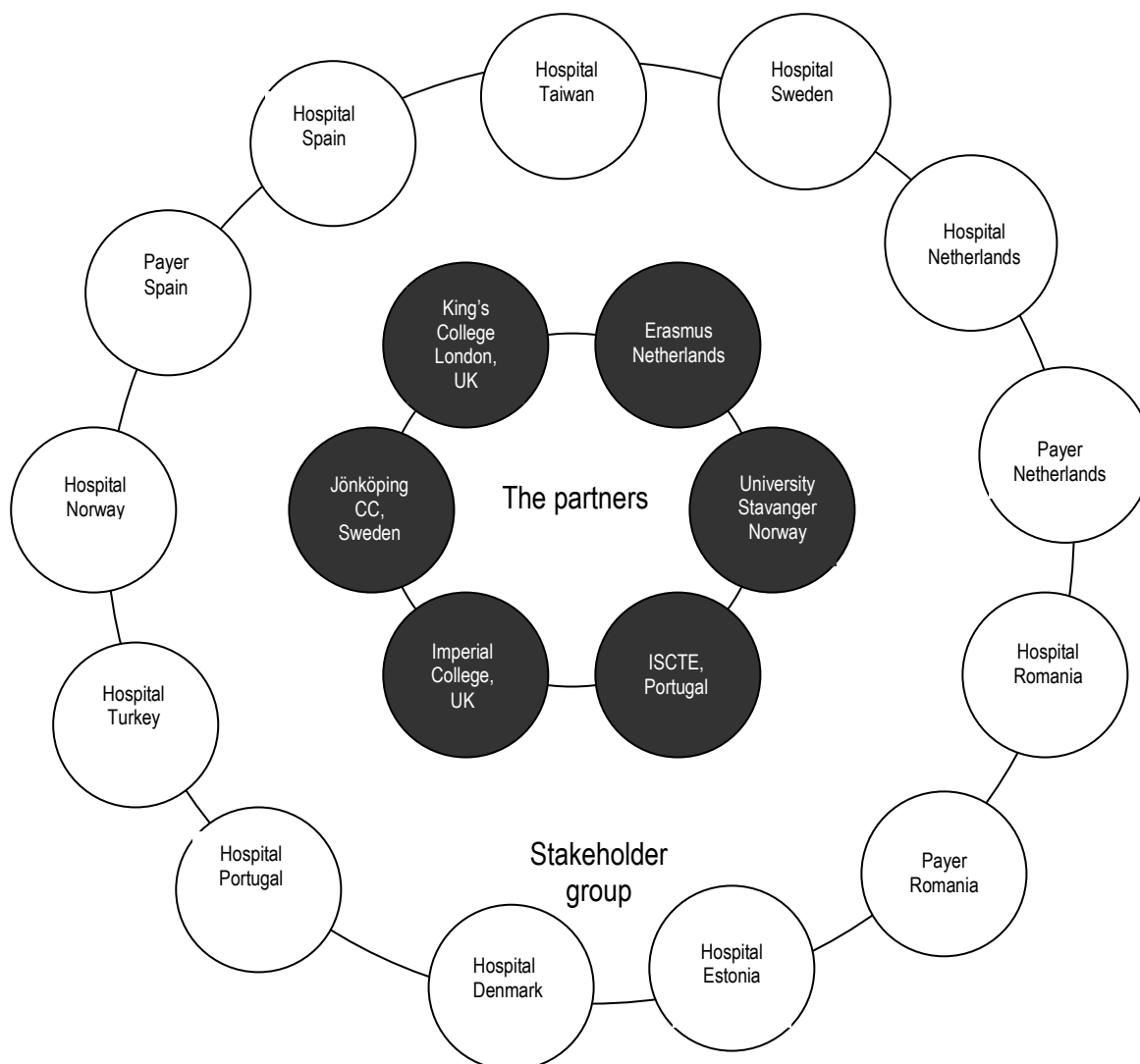
Overall aims

The overall aim of this three year (2010-2013) QUASER study is to explore the relationships between the organisational and cultural characteristics of hospitals and how these impact upon clinical effectiveness, patient safety and patient experience in European Union (EU) countries. This translational study will focus on delivering relevant and useful products to hospital leaders and purchasers of services based on the day-to-day realities of leading and implementing quality improvement programmes. Specifically, the findings will be used

- a. to design and disseminate the *Quality and Safety Guide for Hospitals* - an evidence-based guide to assist hospitals throughout the EU to implement effective organisation-wide quality improvement and safety programmes and, building on this,
- b. to compile and disseminate the *Framework for Assessing Hospital Quality* - an evidence-based framework by which purchasers of hospital services and national and local governments throughout the EU can monitor and assess the effectiveness, patient safety and patient experience of hospital care.

These outputs will be based on empirical findings from research in five partner countries. However, in addition, and crucially, the development of these outputs will be tested within our wider stakeholder group of hospitals and payers across Europe through a parallel process of *translational workshops*.

The following diagram shows the consortium partners and the wider stakeholder group which will participate in the translational workshops.



Specific objectives of the study

1. To identify:
 - a. organisational and cultural characteristics which previous studies have linked to the effectiveness, safety and patient experience of hospital care, and
 - b. quantitative and qualitative indicators of the effectiveness, safety and patient experience of hospital care, by means of scoping reviews of the published and grey literature
 - c. from (a) and (b) above, to develop a suite of analytical data collection tools to support our fieldwork exploring the relationship between the organisational and cultural characteristics of hospitals and the available indicators of effectiveness, safety and patient experience
2. To determine the best methods for translating the research findings into practice i.e. for developing, designing and disseminating the practical guide and framework that will result from this study
3. To apply the suite of analytical tools in a selected sample of ten hospitals in the five partner countries (two in each of the five partner countries). We will then conduct:
 - a. a *meso-level* study of organisational characteristics and cultures and their relationship with available measures of the effectiveness, safety and patient experience of hospital care in ten hospitals (with consideration as to the macro-level contexts); and
 - b. a *micro-level* longitudinal study of two clinical microsystems in five of the ten hospitals (one in each of the five partner countries). These ten in-depth nested case studies will explore what influences the relative effectiveness, safety and patient experience of care in these micro-systems, including the nature and scale of the impact of the identified macro and meso-level organisational and cultural characteristics
4. To identify the relative importance of those organisational and cultural characteristics for the effectiveness, safety and patient experience of care, and the processes by which this has been achieved
5. To design, together with a wider group of stakeholders from hospitals and payers across the EU, and disseminate:
 - a. the *Quality and Safety Guide for Hospitals* - a best practice framework to guide hospitals on implementing effective organisation-wide quality improvement and safety programmes, and
 - b. the *Framework for Assessing Hospital Quality* - a generic, evidence-based framework which purchasers of hospital services, and national and local governments can customise according to the contexts of their health care systems in order to assess the effectiveness, safety and patient experience of hospital care
6. To translate and disseminate the findings of the study by:
 - a. producing a project dissemination plan
 - b. conducting translational workshops with stakeholders
 - c. disseminating the *Guide* and the *Framework*