

Frontline Staff versus Senior Managers: Perceptions of a Patient Safety Initiative

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The Centre for Patient Safety and Service Quality (CPSSQ) is a partnership between Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust and Imperial College London and is part of the National Institute for Health Research. The Centre comprises a highly specialised set of research groups and a wide range of clinical and scientific disciplines created with the aim of improving patient safety and the quality of services within the NHS.

OBJECTIVE

To compare frontline staff and senior manager perceptions of an organisation-wide quality and patient safety programme: The Safer Patients Initiative (SPI).

METHOD

A quantitative study obtained 635 survey responses (a response rate of 52%) at twenty trusts participating in the SPI programme. A purposive sampling strategy included the core SPI improvement team in each organisation and other frontline staff involved within the programme.

Two grouping variables were re-coded into 'Frontline Staff' (clinical frontline and clinical supervisors) and 'Senior Managers' (senior/directorate managers, corporate/organisation services leads and executive board) and Independent T Tests were carried out between the two groups' perceptions of SPI programme elements & success factors, impact & sustainability and safety culture.



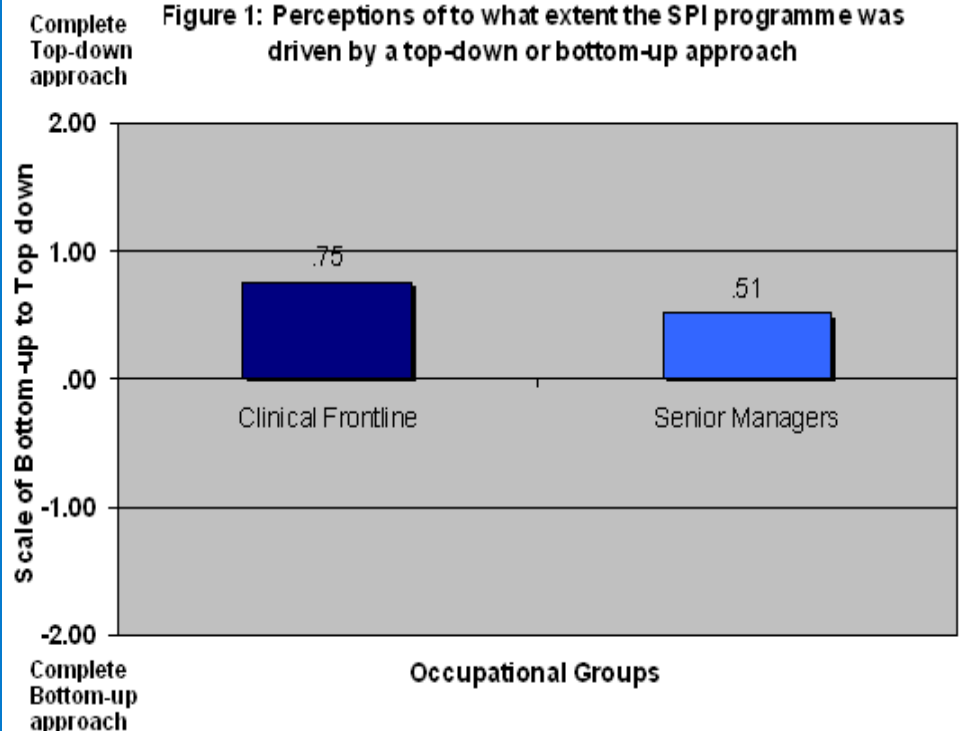
RESULTS

Statistically significant differences were found between the perceptions of frontline staff and senior managers on a wide number of issues, including frontline staff rating that the programme was driven more by a top-down rather than a bottom-up approach ($t=2.292, p=.023$) (see figure 1) and rating support from line managers for the programme significantly higher as a strength for SPI ($t=4.025, p=.000$). Senior managers rated the following factors as significantly more important than was rated by the frontline: 'SPI learning sessions and other IHI supported training events' ($t=-3.476, p=.001$) and 'The clinical care bundle or change elements' ($t = -3.800, p =.000$). Whilst frontline staff rated 'working with a partner organization' as significantly more important than was rated by the managers ($t=-2.749, p=.006$).

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates the importance of getting both (frontline and management) perspectives. Policy makers should not listen to managers alone, they should also be sampling views from the frontline. This holds implications for evaluations of organisation-wide improvement programmes.

Figure 1: Perceptions of to what extent the SPI programme was driven by a top-down or bottom-up approach



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