

What is Patient Safety Culture?

Patient safety culture refers to the shared values, beliefs, and norms within a healthcare organisation that influence staff behaviours and attitudes toward patient safety. It encompasses how errors are communicated, how teams work together, and how leadership supports safety initiatives.

When measuring patient safety culture there are three areas which impact patient safety. These areas are organisational culture, safety culture and patient safety culture.



Organisational Culture

Organisational culture is the shared values, beliefs, attitudes, systems, and rules that outline and influence employee behaviour within an organisation. This culture includes shared values, beliefs, attitudes, systems and rules. In simpler terms it is the “personality” of an organisation.

Safety Culture

Safety culture is the shared values, attitudes, perceptions, competencies, and patterns of behaviour that determine the commitment to, and the style and proficiency of, an organisation’s health and safety management.

Patient Safety Culture

Patient Safety Culture encompasses the shared norms, beliefs, and values that influence individual and collective behaviours related to patient safety within a healthcare organisation. These values include striving to minimise patient harm and deliver safer quality services to patients.

Next Steps

ACHS is offering its Members complimentary and exclusive access to the Patient Safety Culture Survey through Metrik. Contact us today to make an enquiry: pos@achs.org.au

Positive patient safety culture examples

An organisation with positive patient safety culture has strong leadership which demonstrates their commitment to patient safety through their actions and influence. This includes modelling safe behaviours to their employees. Other aspects of positive patient safety culture include:

- Shared beliefs in the importance of patient safety
- Clear and constructive communication
- Mutual trust
- A workforce which is engaged and aware of when things go wrong, with no fear of reporting
- Acknowledgement at all levels that errors occur and a no blame culture
- Ability to recognise, respond and learn from adverse events.

Negative patient safety culture examples

A negative patient safety culture can lead to dysfunctional workplaces and poor outcome of patient care. Examples of this include:

- Limitations in adherence to good clinical governance
- A lack of metrics or awareness of measuring patient outcomes
- A preferential focus on financial targets rather than the outcomes of patients care
- Stressed and pressured staff
- An organisational culture where blame is laid for either reporting or failing in delivering quality care
- Staff which are unengaged and feel disenfranchised by management

This information is a summary from the **Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Healthcare** (ACSQHC). If you would like to read more about patient safety culture please refer to the ACSQHC website: <https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/our-work/indicators-measurement-and-reporting/patient-safety-culture/about-patient-safety-culture>

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