

Introduction

The QUASER project is a three year EC FP7 funded project 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 we employ to understand influences on hospital quality at the macro, meso and micro levels, and the interactions between these levels. The aim of the project is to design and disseminate an evidence based guide for hospitals to implement quality improvements and a framework for payers to assess hospital quality. For more detail, see the published protocol (Robert, G. B. et al, 2011: <http://www.biomedcentral.com/1472-6963/11/285>).

Partners

The director of the project is Professor Naomi Fulop, Professor of Healthcare Organisation and Management at University 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:

- Department of Applied Health Research, University College London, UK. Professor Naomi Fulop.
- The Jönköping Academy for Improvement of Health and Welfare, Jönköping University, Sweden. Professor Boel Andersson-Gare, Professor Johan Calltorp.
- Imperial Centre for Patient Safety and Service Quality (CPSSQ), UK. Professor Charles Vincent, Susan Burnett.
- ISCTE – Instituto Universitário de Lisboa, Portugal. Professor Francisco Nunes
- Department of Health Studies, University of Stavanger, Norway. Professor Karina Aase.

- Department of Health Policy & Management, Erasmus University, Netherlands. Professor Roland Bal, Anne Marie Weggelaar
- Florence Nightingale School of Nursing & Midwifery, King's College London, UK. Professor Glenn Robert, Dr Janet Anderson

Progress with work

Fieldwork

Data collection in the ten case study hospitals (two in each of the five participating countries) is complete. We have analysed the data from interviews, observations and documents and produced reports for each of the five partner countries. These reports form the basis of the cross case analysis which is now underway. For the cross case analysis we have identified important themes in the data and are now analysing these across countries to identify similarities, differences and patterns that we can interpret. The aim is to answer fundamental questions such as how quality is enacted in the five study countries, the influence of macro and meso level factors on quality improvement initiatives at the micro level, and how leaders influence quality work. The cross case analysis will directly inform the development of the Quality and Safety Guide for Hospital Leaders and Framework for Assessing Hospital Quality for payers.

Consortium meetings

The consortium has held two meetings in 2012. We met in Lisbon, Portugal in February and in Stavanger, Norway in June. The Lisbon meeting focused on analysing the data from the case study hospitals. Researchers presented and discussed emerging themes from the data and refined and iterated the analysis process to ensure reliability between the countries. In Stavanger preliminary results from the cross case analysis were presented and a process was agreed for completing the analysis. These

meetings are vital in the process of qualitative data analysis and provide opportunities for reflection, refinement of methods, deepening understanding of the meaning of the data, and many thoughtful and challenging debates.

Dr Geir Sverre Braut, Deputy Director General, Norwegian Board of Health Supervision and member of the QUASER Expert Advisory Board, was a guest speaker at the Stavanger meeting and gave an informative talk on quality and safety in the Norwegian healthcare system.

Stakeholder workshop

Our next stakeholder workshop will be held on September 5th in London. The aim is to involve users and stakeholders in the design of the two guides to ensure that the guides are both useful and relevant. Three groups of stakeholders will attend – hospital managers/clinical leaders, patient group representatives and payers. The focus of the workshop will be on reviewing the findings from the case studies and giving feedback about an early version of the two guides that will be produced.

We have a few places left for patient group representatives and payers to attend the workshop (expenses paid). If you are interested in participating, please contact Susie Edwards: susie.edwards@ucl.ac.uk

QUASER people

The QUASER Project Director, Professor Naomi Fulop, moved to the Department of Applied Health Research at University College London in April, where she is now Professor of Health Care Organisation & Management. Project manager, Susie Edwards, and researcher Heide Poestges also moved to University College London.

We are pleased to introduce the newest researcher to join the project: Kathryn Charles has joined the team at Imperial College in London. Kathryn has a PhD in Management and experience in employing a case study research methodology and qualitative methods. She has contributed to Department of Health commissioned projects focusing on

perceptions of the meaning of quality and safety drawn from a range of stakeholder perspectives and across healthcare contexts in the UK; these projects explored, analysed & evaluated the design and implementation of organisational changes related to quality improvement, patient safety and information technology.

Conference Presentations

International Forum for Quality and Safety in Healthcare, Paris, 2012

A joint workshop was held by researchers from the QUASER and DUQuE (<http://www.duque.eu/>) projects at the International Forum for Quality and Safety in Healthcare held in Paris in April. The DUQuE project, led by Professor Rosa Suñol, is investigating the effectiveness of quality improvement strategies in hospitals using a cross sectional study and quantitative measures. QUASER is using a longitudinal design and collecting in depth qualitative data. The findings of the two projects will therefore provide different perspectives of quality improvement in hospitals in Europe and the workshop was an opportunity to explore this and consider the complementarity of the research methods used.

Groene, O., Fulop, N., & Sunol, R. (2012). Research into the effectiveness of European quality improvement systems: Approaches, evidence and current issues. *BMJ International Forum for Quality and Safety in Health Care*, Paris, April, 2012.

Conference presentations

Bal, R., Quartz, J., Hörbst, V., Poestges, Robert, G., & Sanne, J. (2012). Successful translation in hospital quality improvement: Enactment, risk objects and improvement scripts. Accepted for presentation at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Social Studies of Science (4S). To be held in Copenhagen, 17-20 October 2012.

Burnett S, Poestges H, Charles K, Anderson J, Robert G, Fulop N and the QUASER team (2012). *Quality & Safety in Europe by Research (QUASER): a*

comparative, multi-level study of the system and organisational interactions that shape quality improvement implementation in five European countries. Accepted for presentation at the European Public Health Conference to be held in Malta, 8-10 November 2012.

Fulop, N. (2012). Organisational and social perspectives on patient safety and quality in healthcare: Contributions, critiques, and future directions. Keynote address, 2nd Nordic Conference on Research in Patient Safety and Quality in Healthcare. Held 6-7 March 2012, Copenhagen.

Fulop, N. (2012). Studying quality and safety in European hospitals – QUASER: Understanding organisational and cultural factors influencing the implementation of QI systems. Presented at International Forum on Quality and Safety In Healthcare, 19 April 2012, Paris.

Robert, G. (2012). Creating high performing health care organizations. Panel session. Canadian Association for Health Services and Policy Research Annual Meeting. Held May 2012, Montreal, Quebec.

Wiig, S., Aase, K., & the QUASER team. (2012). A joyous occasion? How centralisation as part of quality improvement shapes power battles within organising of maternity care. Proceedings of the 2nd Nordic Conference on Research in Patient Safety and Quality in Healthcare. Held 6-7 March 2012, Copenhagen.

Wiig, S., Aase, K., Pietikainen, E., Reiman, T., Macchi, L., Anderson, J., Robert, G., & the QUASER team (2012). Studying quality and safety in hospitals by using different theoretical frameworks – what's the difference? Proceedings of the joint conference of Probability Safety Assessment and Management and European Safety and Reliability (PSAM 11 & ESREL) 2012. Held 25-29 June, Helsinki, Finland.

Forthcoming Conferences

Society for Social Studies of Science 4s to be held Copenhagen October 17th – 20th.
<http://www.4sonline.org/>

European Public Health Conference to be held Malta, 8th-10th November, 2012.

http://www.eupha.org/site/upcoming_conference.php

ISQua's 29th International Conference. To be held Geneva October 21st - 24th 2012

<http://www.isquaconference.org/>

International Conference on Quality and Safety in Healthcare to be held London, April, 2013.

<http://internationalforum.bmj.com/>

Paper of interest

Dixon-Woods, M., McNicol, S., & Martin, G. (2012). Ten challenges in improving quality in healthcare: lessons from the Health Foundation's programme evaluations and relevant literature, *BMJ Quality and Safety*, doi:10.1136/bmjqs-2011-000760.

This study used an innovative method to identify the key challenges of improving healthcare quality. Researchers reviewed reports of evaluations of a number of quality improvement programmes and used a narrative review technique to identify ten common challenges that arose in the implementation of large quality improvement programmes. These included challenges in the design and planning of interventions, complexity arising from the organisational context, professions and leadership, sustainability and spread of initiatives, and unintended consequences of interventions. The results clearly show why quality improvement is so difficult and progress is sometimes very slow.

QUASER website

You can find information about the project, leaflets and newsletters to download, & publications by the team on the website at: www.quaserproject.eu

Robert G. B., Anderson J. E., Burnett S. J., Aase K., Andersson-Gare B., Bal R., Calltorp J., Nunes F., Weggelaar A. M., Vincent C. A., Fulop N. J., & Quaser Team. (2011). A longitudinal, multi-level comparative study of quality and safety in European hospitals: the QUASER study protocol. *BMC Health Services Research*, 11. doi: 10.1186/1472-6963-11-285