

MEETING ABSTRACT

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# Feasibility trial to assess the patient safety culture in the professional group of dietitians

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## Background

Patient safety culture is determined by the requirement of understanding of values, attitudes, competences and behavioral patterns [1,2]. Dietitians are health professionals trained to advice on diet, food and nutrition and provide nutrition expertise including nutrition assessment, diet modification and individual or group counseling [3]. Within hospitals, dietitians represent a relatively small professional group. For example, the University Hospital Graz has eleven dietitians and approximately 7,000 employees in total.

The primary aim of this feasibility trial was to assess the perceived patient safety culture solely within the professional group of dietitians. Three hospital organizations from Austria, Germany and Switzerland were invited to participate. To the best of our knowledge this is the first report concerning patient safety culture within the professional group of dietitians.

## Material and methods

ETH Zurich, Center for Organizational and Occupational Sciences (PASKI) translated the HSOPSC survey into German [4]. Survey results are separated into three levels:

- Level 1: **9 dimensions** concerning the unit-level
- Level 2: **3 dimensions** concerning the hospital-level
- Level 3: **3 Outcome** measures

The survey contained 48 questions using the 5-point Likert response scale of agreement. In 2014 a paper-pencil feasibility trial was conducted. The questionnaire was sent to 62 nutrition experts (Austria n = 44, Germany n = 16, Switzerland n = 2); the survey was open for one month. The conduct of the online survey

was approved by the Medical University Graz Ethics Committee (vote-number: 27-002 ex 14/15).

Survey data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Internal consistency of the questionnaire and its items was measured by Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Reliability was considered good if values were >0.7 and very good if values were >0.9. All analyses were conducted using SPSS version 21.

## Results

The overall response rate was 55% (n = 18 (41%) from Austria, n = 14 (88%) from Germany and n = 2 (100%) from Switzerland). Cronbach alpha coefficient ranged from 0.44 for item "feedback and communication about error" to 0.90 for the item "handoffs and transition across units".

## Conclusions

This feasibility trial was the first attempt to attract the professional group of dietitians in assessing the patient safety culture. So far, the professional group of dietitians had been underrepresented in the literature concerning patient safety culture measurements. The targeted goal to compare three nations was not achieved. As only two dietitians from Switzerland took part, just pooled results are shown. Perceived patient safety culture for almost all items had been good, despite the item of "staffing" and "patient safety in general". This feasibility trial could be supportive to further attract patient safety aspects such as critical incident reporting systems or clinical risk management within the professional group of dietitians.

## Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

## Acknowledgements

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**Table 1. Pooled survey results for dietitians from Austria (n = 18), Germany (n = 14) and Switzerland (n = 2)**

	Mean	SD	Median	Min	Max
<b>9 dimensions concerning a unit or department</b>					
Manager expectations and actions promoting safety	4.18	0.67	4.00	2.67	5.00
Organizational learning	4.25	0.55	4.33	3.33	5.00
Teamwork within hospital units	3.92	0.65	4.00	2.50	5.00
Communication openness	3.96	0.58	4.00	2.67	5.00
Feedback and error communication	4.21	0.60	4.17	2.67	5.00
Non-punitive response to error	4.15	0.65	4.00	2.50	5.00
Staffing	2.84	0.94	2.50	1.00	5.00
Management support with respect to patient safety	4.11	0.69	4.25	1.75	5.00
Handoffs and transition within the unit	3.65	0.73	3.71	1.75	5.00
<b>3 Outcome measures</b>					
Frequency of event reporting	3.56	0.78	4.00	1.33	4.67
Overall perceptions of safety	4.11	0.52	4.13	3.25	5.00
Patient safety in general	2.17	0.45	2.00	1.00	3.00
<b>3 dimensions concerning the hospital</b>					
Teamwork across hospital units	3.78	0.57	3.75	2.50	5.00
Handoffs and transition across units	3.62	0.63	3.67	2.50	5.00
Supervisor expectations and actions promoting safety	4.15	0.55	4.33	2.67	5.00

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