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Abstract (oral session)

**Factors influencing leadership dynamics in the context of infection control: a cross-case analysis of six European hospitals**

L. Clack\*, A. Casillas, S. Touveneau, F. da Liberdade Jantarada, W. Zingg, H. Sax on behalf of the European FP7 PROHIBIT Consortium

Objectives: Leadership is often cited as integral to successful quality improvement activities. Yet much remains to be explored about characteristics of influential individuals, including those who may not be formally assigned leaders, and the dynamic conditions under which they influence their surroundings. This aspect of organizational culture was examined as part of InDepth, the qualitative inquiry work package of the FP7 PROHIBIT project to reduce catheter-related bloodstream infections in European hospitals. The study presented here aims to provide a more global understanding of leadership dynamics in European hospitals. Methods: A case study was conducted in ICUs of six acute-care hospitals purposefully sampled out of 15 PROHIBIT centers according to an extremes and intensity logic. During site visits, data collection included semi-structured interviews with health providers, ethnographic observations, and photo documentation. Verbatim interview transcripts were analyzed using a grounded approach and “influential individuals” were identified based on interviewee accounts of positive and negative leadership. Cross-case data analysis was conducted combining case- and variable-oriented approaches displayed in a meta-matrix in order to identify cross-case trends in leadership dynamics. Results: A total of 65 one-hour interviews were conducted with interviewees from top management (14), infection control (19) and ICU’s (32). The types of influential individuals described most commonly by interviewees were: “relations-oriented leaders”, “innovators”, “problem-solvers”, “servant leaders” and “promoters of bi-directional communication” (Table). “Availability” and “supportiveness” were the primary qualities used to describe positive leaders; an absence of these qualities denoted negative leaders. Positive leaders were commonly cited as being “motors of organizational culture change”. Descriptions of influential individuals typically went beyond their intrinsic characteristics and highlighted social interactions in the organization. Conclusions Cross-case analysis is an ideal methodology for this study, revealing dynamics across several cases and exploring how they are qualified by local conditions. Grounded analysis allowed for classification of leadership trends among 6 European hospitals that focus on dynamic social interactions. This classification may form the basis of a framework to inform future inquiries into leadership and organizational culture.