

## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** WHO defines Patient Safety as “prevention of errors and adverse effects to patients associated with Healthcare” (WHO, 2018). Patient safety has been identified as one of the major concerns in the present-day health services affecting the quality of care as well as increasing the burden on health budgets. Being a High Reliability Organization (HRO), the importance of improving patient safety of hospitals of the SLAF is of paramount importance. Past studies conducted on Patient safety in Sri Lanka highlighted that the Hospitals lagged behind in teamwork, communication and event reporting (M Amarapathy, March 2013).

**Objectives:** The general objective of this study was to describe the existing status of patient safety culture at hospitals of the Sri Lanka Air Force.

**Methodology:** This was a “Descriptive Cross-sectional Study” carried out at the four hospitals of the SLAF located at Colombo, Katunayaka, Ratmanalana and Chinabay. Study sample was 157 Doctors, Nursing Officers and other health staff. The study instrument was a validated self-administered questionnaire developed by the Agency of Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), US Department of Health, which was amended by the researcher to meet the requirements.

**Results:** The overall response rate of the study was 97.5. Approximately 73.1 percent of the staff stated, they work more than 60 hours per week. Organizational learning was identified at 77.1 percent while 54.2 percent of the respondents stated that they had to sacrifice patient safety to do more work (ANOVA, Sig=0.154). With regard to event reporting, the overall positive composite was approximately 44.4 percent

Managerial commitment towards patient safety revealed an overall composite positive response of 69.9 percent. Further analysis of staffing related factors revealed an overall

positive composite score of approximately 43.6 percent with the adequacy of staff being 26.6 percent. The positive composite on non-punitive response to errors was revealed at 27.3 percent (ANOVA, Sig=0.000), while approximately 82.8 percent of the respondents stated that there would be adverse impacts on their careers if patient safety incidents occurred and reported (Sig=0.000).

Positive composite score for knowledge on prevention of HAIs and practices of hand hygiene was 62.4 percent and 82.4 percent respectively. Approximately 64.3 percent of the respondents felt the improper positioning of hand rubs and wash basins was a barrier to hand washing.

**Discussion and recommendation:** The available medical staff at the four SLAF hospitals was found to be inadequate which has resulted in significantly high workload. Since increased workload has been identified as a risk factor for human errors, it is recommended to increase the staff of the hospitals and to arrange duty rosters appropriately. The researcher recommends hospital management to take necessary steps to develop a more open and cordial work climate, as well as to eliminate the fear of medical staff regarding punitive action to errors, in order to develop an open and just culture within the hospitals. It is recommended to place hand rubs and wash basins at convenient locations.

**Key Words:** Patient Safety, High Reliability Organization, Sri Lanka Air Force, Teamwork, Communication, Hospital Acquired Infections