UNLOCKING SUCCESS FACTORS:

An exploration of antimicrobial stewardship excellence in paediatric intensive care through thematic analysis of appreciative inquiry interviews with healthcare staff

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Introduction:

Antimicrobial resistance is a major global health issue, and antimicrobial stewardship (AMS) interventions are essential to mitigate the associated risks. Most AMS interventions focus on negative or normative feedback. This approach may miss opportunities to learn from success.

We have previously demonstrated improvements in AMS following positive feedback and appreciative inquiry (AI) interviews. In this study, we undertook a thematic analysis of the qualitative data from those interviews to understand the factors enabling success in AMS practices.

Methods:

A thematic analysis of AI inquiry interviews was conducted in our 31-bedded PICU from January 2017 for 12 months. Seventy-one interviews with 28 prescribers and 43 nurses followed episodes where excellence in prescribing practice or timely administration of antimicrobials had been identified.

A multi-disciplinary research team performed the thematic analysis. Each member read and coded the data independently, followed by iterative discussion and interpretive themes being agreed jointly across the whole data set.

Results: Six themes were identified within three over-arching themes:

SYSTEM FACTORS:

1. Cultural factors including psychological safety, leadership and positive attitude are important enablers for good care.

2. Ergonomic design of the environment and availability of tools and resources are key elements to support good practice.

TEAM FACTORS:

3. Expertise and support from members of the multidisciplinary team contribute to good care.

4. Clarity of verbal and written communication is important for sharing mental models and aims of care within the team.

INDIVIDUAL FACTORS

5. A range of intrinsic factors influence the performance of individuals, including organisation skill, fear of failure, response to positive reinforcement, and empathetic considerations.

6. Good clinical care is underpinned by sound domain knowledge, which can be acquired through training, mentorship and experience

Conclusion:

Understanding the success factors indicates how they could be leveraged to improve healthcare quality and safety across both AMS and extending to other healthcare contexts. Applying these findings locally, we could optimse environmental design, train leaders in psychological safety, support training programmes for domain knowledge, improve communication and acknowledge diversity in individual factors. Our findings could help inform intervention in healthcare improvements at individual, team and organisational levels.