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**The contributions of the concept of ‘high reliability organisation’ to the**

**improvement of safety and quality in acute care services**

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**Abstract**

The quest to improve the quality and safety of care is a major preoccupation in healthcare organisations. The quality and safety of care depend mainly on the practices of medical and nursing staff. The article investigates clinical quality and safety from the perspective of the ‘high reliability organisation’ (HRO) (Roberts 1990).

An exploratory qualitative approach is adopted in order to test the relevance of the characteristics of HROs. Twelve interviews were conducted with medical and nursing staff in 2 acute care departments in a teaching hospital: a paediatric critical care department and a paediatric haematology-oncology department.

The conditions of patients in these departments are complex and constantly changing, which increases the risk of mistakes. The results show that, above and beyond the clinical standards and protocols laid down by the French National Authority for Health and the medical and nursing associations, the quality and safety of cared depend on a collective mind and collective action, which are shown to rely, in turn, on shared knowledge and representations. These are constructed in the course of different management situations (training, mentoring, meetings, clinical simulations, etc.) as well as through informal exchanges between different categories of personnel. While they are essential, these management situations are none the less fragile and it is the responsibility of managers and supervisors to ensure that they are maintained.

Mitigation Risks to reach level of High Reliability is a major concern for hospital, but also for lot of different kind of organisations. We will observe how interrelations cope with behaviors in multiple sectors: Civil engineering, Fire-fighters teams, Opera...