

Blame Discourses

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Blame Discourses

- Blame: the act of censuring or holding someone at fault; often a negative judgment that is the opposite of 'praise' and 'commendation'
- Discourse: the relationship between language (what is 'said' and how) to structure (i.e., institutions, social infrastructure) and agency (i.e., individual choice, freedom)

Blame Discourses

Overview

1. What is a 'blame culture'?
2. How is blame culture perpetuated?
3. What are its effects?
4. Can it be beneficial?
5. What are its drawbacks?
6. What are the alternatives?
7. Will alternative cultures lead to greater patient safety?

What is a Blame Culture?

- The culture that 'names, blames, and shames' (Lester and Tritter 2001) those who make medical errors
- Individual users are seen as the problem rather than other (often larger) systemic issues (e.g., devices, workplace conditions, training, etc.) that often work together to contribute to the 'perfect storm' of the error
- Creates 'second victims' of those who have been blamed for medical errors (Scott et al. 2009; Wu 2000) other than the potential for job loss there are other notable effects, including: significant emotional issues (Delbanco & Bell 2007), lack of support (Waterman et al. 2005), and the possibility of one dimensionally negative media coverage (Mykietiak et al. 2013), etc.

How Does the Culture Get Perpetuated?

- Focusing on user errors without considering larger, systemic issues (e.g., consider the ecosystem)
- Lack of awareness and empathy concerning the likelihood of errors and factors influencing error
- Larger societal patterns with respect to how errors are regarded (e.g., litigiousness)

What are the Effects of a Blame Culture?

- Employees become fearful of potential errors
- Staff become resistant to report errors after they occur
- Underlying issues leading to the error do not get broached
- The frequency of errors is overlooked
- Good employees may lose their jobs (and others may choose to go into other careers)
- Patients become fearful
- Bad publicity
- Transformational change is unlikely

Are There Benefits of a Blame Culture?

- Institutions are seen to be dealing with the error by sanctioning individuals
- Idea that it keeps workers on their toes
- 'Personal responsibility' fits within larger neo-liberal frameworks
- May relieve the institution of legal responsibility

What are the Drawbacks of Blame Cultures?

- Fear and anxiety about potential errors
- Guilt and shame after making errors
- Lowered reporting of medical errors
- Limited dialogue about errors because of fear of retribution
- Lack of understanding about the causes of medical errors
- Inability to prevent future errors

What are the Alternatives to Blame Culture?

- A culture where learning and accountability are balanced with responsibility
- A holistic, multi-faceted approach to errors that engages the entire system
- A reporting procedure that is not based on fear but how the system and individuals can learn from and prevent errors

Will the Alternatives Lead to Greater Patient Safety?

- It's unclear until they are implemented but what is known is that the current culture isn't working for healthcare professionals or patients, and errors are often under-reported and lack substantive analysis all of which indicates that... change is needed

Blame Culture as Seen in Headlines

Nurse made 'catastrophic' error by giving baby overdose of salt

Four-month-old baby dies after 'drug error'

Nurse 'gave baby fatal overdose after posting this picture on Facebook'

Nurse 'fell asleep on duty' before baby died

'██████████ is goin 2 treat herself 2 bottle wine!' Facebook boast of nurse allowed back to work after fatally giving baby ten times correct dose of salt

Nurse who gave baby lethal dose of salt caught FAST ASLEEP in damning picture taken beside tragic tot's cot 11 days before her fatal error

Incompetent ██████████ posted snap of her with four-month-old on Facebook.

Nurse admits overdose which led to baby death

Baby salt tragedy nurse back on ward

Nurse involved in baby's salt solution overdose death is under investigation

Nottingham officials investigating baby's 'salt overdose' death

'Distracted' nurses' drug error killed baby



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Good Luck!