

MANAGEMENT, COMMUNICATION IN THE HEALTH INSTITUTION

VALENTINA VRUĆAN

Pan European University Apeiron, Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina, valentina_vrucan1@hotmail.com

ABSTRACT: If we look around, we can easily notice that the world would not function without communication. How could we express our thoughts and what we want unless we say it, show it and touch it? Therefore, the business world could not function without interpersonal communication either, especially in the health institutions.

The beginning of the research was based on the hypothesis that communication had to be open for the system to function, and employees satisfied with the working atmosphere and the relationship with the facility management. It was assumed that verbal communication was the most common form of communication, which often resulted in conflicts among health professionals. The research showed that the respondents were aware of the importance of creating effective communication, both within the same health care facility and outside it, especially conversation, assuming that they can convey the most important information in the shortest possible time. The data on formal communication at workplace indicated that employees believe that communication with their colleagues did not have to be formal, because in that way collective work would be more productive and the working atmosphere more pleasant. It is very important for every health care institution to invest enough funds in the activities, such as the health service promotion. Teamwork, health managers and employees contributed to the development of the health institution.

Key words: health management, health manager, communication, promotion.

INTRODUCTION

Communication represents an essential and very important human need and it refers to the process of conveying a message, processing its content and receiving it. Dress code or uniform is also a form of communication and indicates the seriousness of the work such as a health profession (Dobrijevic, 2011).

Managers can play a formal and informal role in health management. The formal role is played by the chief medical technician in an organization or a hospital. An informal role refers to the case when nurses / technicians gather and participate in seminars or professional meetings. They deal with planning, organization, coordination and work control, they stimulate and motivate subordinates and try to use the available resources as effectively as possible (Rakić, S., Antičić, D, 2015).

Health promotion and disease prevention programs focus on keeping people healthy and every health facility aims to engage and empower individuals and communities to choose healthy habits, and make changes that reduce the risk of developing chronic diseases and other morbidities. Promotional strategy is closely related to the communication process. It is important that the message is customized in terms of content, because otherwise it will not reach the desired effect. The reputation or image of a healthcare facility refers to its overall picture, or the opinion, prejudices, attitudes, experience of individuals or the public with the healthcare facility (Williams, 2010). The main strategy in promoting a market presence and gaining public and target groups trust is to create a healthy corporate image. The success of the facility will further depend on the image itself ((Lamb, C. W., Hair, JR, J.F., McDaniel C., 2017).

The research aimed to determine: the method and type of communication in the health care facility, employees' satisfaction with horizontal and vertical communication, acquirement of new knowledge in the field of health management and the importance of open communication, regardless the possible conflicts of interest.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research was conducted through a survey in paper form, with twenty-one questions and at least two or more offered answers. Theoretical framework which was used to form questions was about communication methods, health managers and management and promotional activities in health care. The research was anonymous because it was conducted for the purpose of a master thesis. It was implemented at the Primary Health Care Center in Bijeljina. Participation was voluntary and a large number of employees agreed to participate in the survey, even 98 of them, from various clinics and services, which was enough for this research. The research that was conducted among the employees of this health care facility was very important, because it was an indicator of their mutual functioning in their working environment. Respondents, who were included, were health professionals, different profiles of doctors and medical technicians, and no one was excluded. In order to get a realistic picture, related to this topic, all participants in the survey were equal, regardless of age, level of education and work experience (table 1, 2, 3). The response rate was satisfying; all of them answered all of the questions. It was conducted in August, 2021. The results of the survey were processed in MS Office, presented in charts and tables, and textually explained.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The largest number of respondents was exactly the target group that should be influenced. 46.9% of respondents were under 30 years old, 34.7% between 30 and 40 years old. 16.3% were 40 to 50 years old, 2.1% were over 50 years old.

Table 1. Data indicating the number of women and men in the survey

Respondents' gender	N	%
Male	15	15,3%
Female	83	84,7%
Total	98	100%

In the chosen healthcare facility, the majority of employees had secondary education suitable for the profession they performed. As the questionnaire was conducted on staff regardless the part of the institution they were employed in, out of the total number of respondents, 76 finished high school for medical professions (77.5%), 16 were holding university degree (16.3%), while 6 respondents were with postsecondary education degree (6.1%).

Table 2. Data indicating a work experience in a health care institution

Length of service	N	%
Up to 10	51	52,1%
10-20	28	28,6%
20-30	17	17,3%
Over 30	2	2,0 %
Total	98	100%

Table 3. The respondents' opinion on an importance of communication in a health care institution

Do you think that good communication between employees is one of the most important segments of work in health care?	N	%
Yes	79	80,6%
No	3	3,1%
Other elements	16	16,3%
Total	98	100%

Table 4. The review of respondents' knowledge of health managers duties and responsibilities

Do you know the levels of health care management and what are the duties and responsibilities of health managers?	N	%
No	5	5,0%
Yes	81	82,6%
Partially	12	12,4%
Total	98	100%

Table 5. The review of respondents' experience as healthcare managers or leaders

Have you ever been a health care manager or a leader?	N	%
Yes	16	16,33%
No, nor do I want to	25	25,5%
No, but I would like to	57	58,17%
Total	98	100%

The largest percentage of respondents expressed belief that health care managers of their health care facility invested effort and showed a desire for institution success, and this was indicated by the results that 80 (81.6%) answered negatively, 2 (2.1%) answered positively, and 16 of them (16.3%) did not express their opinion on this issue.

Table 6. The review of the respondents' promotional activities on work or outside

Do you promote the health care facility and its services through health and educational work or in other ways outside your workplace?	N	%
Yes, often	77	78,6%
Rarely	14	14,3%
No	7	7,1%
Total	98	100%

Table 7. The review of the respondents' opinion on communication with their superiors

Do you have open communication with your superiors or a certain fear to point out a problem?	N	%
Completely open communication	49	50,0%
Partially open communication	37	37,75%
Fear of expressing opinion	2	2,1%
Communication based on issuing work orders	10	10,2%
Total	98	100%

Table 8. The review of the respondents' opinion on a facility image

Does the health care facility image depend more on the management or employees?	N	%
Management	18	18,4%
Both	63	64,3%
Employees	17	17,3%
Total	98	100%

Table 9. The review of the respondents' opinion on a health care service promotion

If is a health service often promoted in the media or in similar ways, do you consider it to be of good quality?	N	%
Yes	54	55,1%
No	24	24,5%
I don't know	20	20,4%
Total	98	100%

The obtained results indicated positive changes in the attitudes of health workers, raising the level of professional competence and awareness.

Table 10. The review of the respondents' opinion on communication with colleagues

Are you open to communicate with colleagues in other sectors / clinics or other health care facilities?	N	%
Yes	98	100%
No	0	0 %
Total	98	100%

71,4% of respondents answered that if there was a problem, the solution should certainly be sought through conversation or communication. 20.4% of respondents answered that if there was a problem, they would immediately contact their superiors. There was also a smaller, but no less important percentage, 8.2% of respondents who did not want to come into conflict, even though they thought they were right.

Table 11. The review of the most represented types of communication within this health care facility

What type of communication is the most represented in your healthcare facility?	N	%
Verbal-conversation	68	69,4%
Medical documentation	7	7,14%
Nonverbal-body language	4	4,1%
Use of technology, exp. Telephone call, e-mail	17	17,34%
Other ways	2	2,04%
Total	98	100%

Table 12. The review of the respondents' strictly professional communication with colleagues

Is communication with colleagues strictly professional?	N	%
No	93	94,9%
Yes	5	5,1%
Total	98	100%

DISCUSSION

Communication is a fundamental clinical skill that, if performed competently and efficiently, provides trust between the medical staff and the patient or client, which makes them a real therapeutic alliance. The hypothesis that verbal communication was the most common type of communication with health managers was confirmed, but the other methods were also stated (table 11).

The respondents considered open communication as an obligation, because that was the only way to function, improve their work and create high-quality interpersonal relationships, which confirmed the main hypothesis of a survey. The employees wanted to feel comfortable at work, without feeling of discomfort, inconvenience and anxiety, and that was the reason why the work atmosphere was so important to them. This might have been concluded considering the fact that they talked to each other, helped each other and suggested a problem (table 12).

Previous research showed that employees considered the best managers to be those who actively listen and allow employees to participate. Conflicts were usual thing because it was normal that different people could have different opinion for the same thing, but more important thing was the fact that staff overcame them by conversation, with the help of managers or in other ways. Understanding how conflicts aroused was important in their prevention. From an employee's perspective, triggers included lack of communication, unfair criticism, silly rules, preferential treatment, sexism or racial inequality, humiliation, unreasonable expectations, and verbal abuse. From the management perspective, problems aroused from poor communication, inappropriate responses, poor prioritizing, personal work interfering with professional work, and clock-watching. However, teamwork was a priority in medicine and compromises were needed (Ramsay, 2001).

The study in the medical services domain noted that interactions between patients and health care professionals affected both patients' satisfaction and perceived quality of the medical services that they received, and that it could contribute to a better performance of the medical unit (table 9) (Interpersonal communication in healthcare, 2018).

It was proven, in the previous researches, that a healthcare management was an extensive job, which required the involvement of the entire health system, staff, finances and other factors. It was still important to invest in the health promotion and the development of healthy habits, disease prevention and early treatments and diagnoses, which was the main mission of every health institution (table 4 and 5).

When it came to taking credit for success, opinions were divided. Most of the respondents believed that for success and better image of the health care facility, the management and employees were equally important. Above mentioned data showed that the hypothesis that only health managers were responsible for the success and image of the health facility was refuted (table 8).

Health care managers could develop plans for a health care organization growth or formulate strategies to adjust to changes in the health care market. They should learn, train and practice more if they wanted to progress in terms of leadership or managerial functions. The interest in continuing education and high quality health care services promotion gave us information that our health care system was moving in a good direction. For example, the vaccination promotion (covid 19) was for the purpose of collective health protection, and not to make a profit. The absolute willingness to cooperate with colleagues from the other sectors and health care institutions could provide the progress of the whole health care system in our country (table 10) (Dragic M. , 2017).

Some products or health care services, despite their good quality, could be neglected, because there was a lack of promotion and that should be changed. The main reason for this was probably an insufficient service improvement activity or an inadequate approach to marketing. That could affect health managers who should involve health care professionals in the whole business process and progress in health care, because of their qualifications, skills, organizational and other abilities and their contribution to the team and the institution. It was for sure that there work some creative people who were ready to take a risk and express useful ideas (table 11).

The common occurrence in every health care institution regardless the region was high percentage of cooperation with colleagues, which required the use of medical and nursing documentation as a source of a large amount of useful information and tendency to create comfortable working conditions without unnecessary stress. A lot of pressure, little time and a lot of work could affect healthcare workers to reduce communication with patients or colleagues. Empathy was also very important, because the target population was very sensitive due to the specific condition (illness, hospitalization, etc) (Segic, 2011).

CONCLUSION

The main hypothesis was confirmed that a pleasant working atmosphere with effective organizational communication is the key in achieving the common goals of the organization. There was a need to emphasize more promotional activities online and in other ways. Based on the survey, we also gained insight into the staff education on health management, their experience as leaders in health care (if they had it), the employee relations and their relation with healthcare managers. It was important that healthcare professionals make effort to overcome conflicts and therefore give importance to effective communication. It was also possible to organize online discussion groups so that managers and workers could work together to solve problems. It was important to encourage the use of horizontal communication, because more experienced colleague could help a younger colleague at work. Fast-growing companies, for example, sought to inform employees about what happened in the company, but they designed and determined the image for the outside world. Today, the health care centers strove to inform employees about what happened there and motivated them to take part in the progress of the institution.

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