

Professional Development and Qualification of Health Care Managers in the Conditions of the COVID 19 Epidemiological Situation

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Keywords: Managers, Management, Competencies, Program, Covid-19.

Abstract: In the conditions of epidemiological situation the responsibility and the increased requirements to the healthcare managers significantly increase. Determining the competencies of management staff in a pandemic is a complex process that requires the use of various methods and tools to identify problems related to the situation. The main task of managers is to prevent or limit the spread of coronavirus in hospitals. Healthcare managers are required to have competencies in the following areas: conflict management; motivating employees; solving problems; information analysis; control; organizing; coordination. Achieving the goals of each organization depends on the human factor and its effective management. Finding the right ways and approaches to deal with problems is among the most important management functions of managers. The effectiveness of health care and its management are related to medical professionals and their motivation to work. On the other hand, managers must be motivated to develop their competencies and professional skills, as a condition for quality of the management and creating an optimal organization of work. The purpose of the present work is to consider the main management functions of the healthcare managers and to determine the main aspects for continuous development of their competences in epidemiological situation as a condition for improving management efficiency and quality of health care.


1 INTRODUCTION


The sustainable development of health facilities in the competitive environment of the market economy depends on their ability to provide affordable and effective medical care. The healthcare is an important part of them and their quality is a major factor in patient satisfaction, as a condition for economic stability of health structures. All this determines the role of healthcare managers and emphasizes the importance of their competencies to achieve optimal organization and favorable working environment in providing health services in accordance with public needs and modern understandings of the quality of medical care (Dobrilova, 2014; Bogdanova, 2019; Dimitrova, 2019).

Healthcare managers are required to perform complex management responsibilities because traditional boundaries between administrative and medical management are gradually disappearing

(Slipovic and Masic, 2012). Their knowledge and skills in planning, organizing, directing and controlling financial, human and material resources largely determine the effectiveness of health services (Moore et al. 2002). It is also necessary for these managers to have behavior which is specific to healthcare management, and in addition they must observe the concepts inherent in nursing (Chaneva, 2015; Chaneva et al., 2016).

The responsibility of healthcare managers and their requirements increase significantly in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. Diagnosing the competencies of management staff, in an epidemiological environment, is a complex process that requires the use of various methods and complex approaches to identify all problematic situations in hospital structures (Bogdanova and Trendafilova, 2020). The main task for managers is to prevent or limit the spread of coronavirus in hospitals (World Health Organization, 2019).

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Although there is no clear definition of the main competencies and skills required of managers, it is generally accepted that further academic and professional development are necessary for the competent performance of management functions (Williams and Ewell, 1996).

The dynamic external environment and the growing social demands require a steady increase in the cost of knowledge needed to the standards of best management practice. This is a prerequisite for the competitiveness and economic stability of health structures and determines the main aspects of the strategy for the development of medical institutions (Slavkova, 2019; Bogdanova and Trendafilova, 2020).

The nursing profession is changing in conformity with the development of medical science and practice. This hampers the differentiation of autonomous functions and responsibilities of nurses. In response to the WHO's provisions regarding healthcare standards in the practice of European countries, it is needed a new approach to nursing care, which will contribute to improving professional skills for analysis of the patient condition and using of individual care plan. (Dimitrova, 2019).

The purpose of the present work is to consider the main management functions of the healthcare managers and to determine the main aspects for continuous development of their competences in epidemiological situation as a condition for improving management efficiency and quality of health care.

2 OBJECT AND METHOD OF WORK

The object of the study is healthcare management in hospital wards in epidemiological situation of Covid - 19. The study is based on analysis of existing research and literature sources related to the nature and development of the competencies of health care managers and the organization of healthcare in conditions of coronavirus pandemic. In accordance with the main management functions, the main aspects of a program for continuous development and enhancement of the professional competencies of healthcare managers in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic have been identified.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There are different frameworks for defining managerial competencies (Dixon, 2006; Groothooff, 2009; Georgieva et al. 2017). They are usually associated with certain skills or combinations of skills depending on various factors, such as the level of management, the level of development of the health system, staff qualifications, the organization of work in the health structure and others (Calhoun et al., 2002; Liang, 2013). Effective health care management requires managers to have competencies in the following areas: conflict management; motivating employees; solving problems; information analysis; control; organizing; coordination. In this context, the basic management skills are identified, the improvement of which is necessary for the development of the competencies of managers: making decisions based on evidence; administration and management of resources; knowledge of the health environment and the organization; communication skills and management of interpersonal relationships; leadership; initiative and innovation (Liang, 2018; Bogdanova and Trendafilova, 2020).

Achieving the goals of each organization depends on the human factor and its effective management. Finding the right ways and approaches to deal with problems is among the most important management functions of managers (Pachev, 1999; Savov, 1999). This emphasizes the importance of managers' communication skills for effective human resource management in accordance with the interests of the organization and the members of the work team.

The efficiency of management and the quality of health care are closely related to the motivation of staff. To a large extent, it is determined by the socio-economic conditions, but it does not reduce the role of healthcare managers. The creation of a favorable working environment and the motivation of the staff depend on their qualification and professional skills (Bogdanova, 2019; Jooste and Klipert, 2002). On the other hand, managers must be motivated to develop their competencies and professional skills, as a condition for quality of the management and creating an optimal organization of work (Bogdanova and Trendafilova, 2020). The motivation of health care managers to improve their skills and develop competencies is related to the prospects for their career development (Basarov, 2003; Dimitrov, 2009). They should be informed of the hospital management's assessment of the accordance of their knowledge and skills with the requirements for the positions held. They must also have a clear idea of

what they need to achieve as a result of the training, such as the level of knowledge and skills, abilities and behavior, and what change in pay new knowledge and skills lead to, which increases the motivation of healthcare workers. This emphasizes the need for a program for continuous development of competencies and improving the professional skills of managers.

The program should be based on a system for monitoring the competencies of health care managers, as a condition for the relevance, effectiveness and practical applicability of training in accordance with the standards for quality of health services (Pachev, 1999; Calhoun et al., 2002 Slipovic and Masic, 2012; Bogdanova and Trendafilova, 2020). The professional development of health professionals depends not only on their training in educational institutions, but is largely determined by the opportunities for improvement in the workplace. Each medical institution must invest resources and energy for training, continuous qualification and professional development of its employees in accordance with the principles of "continuity of training", "interdisciplinary" and "multidisciplinary" approach, as a basis for achieving effective and sustainable development of health structures. This creates conditions and prospects for career development and provides the necessary attachment and motivation by linking between the personal and organization goals (Chaneva, 2005; Bogdanova, 2019).

The application of management methods and tools in the organization of health care in the hospital ward is an important condition for the quality of their management. Continuous informing about the novelties in the organization of care and the application of management methods is a prerequisite for improving the quality and efficiency of medical care. This can be achieved by developing and introducing a unified model of healthcare management, which will regulate the rights and obligations of healthcare managers and ensure better organization in the medical institution. The application of such model requires managers and healthcare professionals to have the relevant competencies, knowledge and professional skills (Bogdanova, 2019).

The introduction of documents that describe the procedures and elements of the process of health care in hospital wards help to ensure their quality. Such documents are the healthcare protocols and technical slips, which determine the standard performance of care and their level of quality. Their development and implementation is carried out by the head nurse at the

hospital, with the participation of the best specialists (Bogdanova, 2019).

The spread of Covid 19 infection in the last year has affected all spheres of public life around the world. Coronavirus (Covid-19) is a respiratory virus that is transmitted by airborne droplets, by touching infected surfaces or directly by hand-nose, hand-eye, hand-mouth, hand-hand, but only if the hand of a healthy person had contact with a sick person. The symptoms of the virus are cough, fever, difficulty breathing, muscle aches and fatigue and others.

Coronavirus has imposed rules and requirements in hospitals and changed the management and organization of health care. In the wards for treatment of the infection, rules for disinfection, putting on special work clothes, washing hands, regime of entering and leaving the ward have been introduced. The main problem for healthcare managers in an epidemiological situation is finding medical professionals who are trained to work in a situation of emergency anti-epidemic measures. The application of modern management methods and tools is directly related to the implementation of current information technologies and the competencies of managers for their use. This allows correct data analysis and provides greater opportunities for quality control and assessment as a factor for effective work organization.

All this confirms the need to create conditions for continuous development of manager competences and qualification increase of healthcare professionals in the epidemiological situation.

The strategies to prevent or limit the spread of the disease in health facilities include the following: providing triage, early detection and control of the source, isolating patients with suspected infection, applying standard precautions for all patients and staff, applying empirical additional precautions measures in case of suspicion of cases of infection, implementation of administrative control, use of environmental and engineering control (World Health Organization, 2019).

Based on the research, in accordance with the main management functions and WHO recommendations for preventing and limiting the spread of coronavirus, the following main aspects of a program for continuous development and enhancing the professional competencies of healthcare managers have been formulated:

- I. Increasing the motivation of managers for professional development in the conditions of Covid 19:

- Participation in seminars for increasing the knowledge and skills for performing managerial activity in the epidemiological situation;
- Updating management goals;
- Analysis and synthesis of the results of healthcare management.

II. Continuous training to improve management skills:

- Participation in specialized training courses for care in the epidemiological situation;
- Planning and implementation of new management activities;
- Participation in management projects.

III. Use and introduction of management methods and tools, appropriate and applicable in the epidemiological situation:

- Development and introduction of funds for planning, organization and control of health care;
- Training and control of medical specialists on the application and use of protective equipment and measures at work;
- Implementation of assessment system for patients on admission;
- Application of standard precautions for all patients;
- Application of additional precautions.

IV. Development of communication skills and dealing with conflict situations:

- Planning activities to increase the effectiveness of communication with staff and management of conflict situations before they occur.

V. Improving the skills to motivate staff and apply appropriate management styles:

- Planning and implementing of different management styles;
- Study of staff motivation and application of means to stimulate and motivate staff.

4 CONCLUSIONS

The results of the study provide a basis for optimizing the training for skills acquisition to competent performance of management functions in a pandemic. Healthcare managers must have all the necessary knowledge to prevent and limit the spread of Covid-19 infection in healthcare facilities. The program for continuous development of their competencies requires them to have skills for working with databases and software products, providing continuous access to the information needed to make timely and adequate management decisions.

Continuous training and competence development of healthcare managers provides

prospects for career development which is a factor for their motivation. This is an essential aspect of the human resources development and important part of the strategy for high competitiveness and sustainable development of the hospitals.

The program for competence development of managers will help to increase the quality and efficiency of health care in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. This program must be constantly adapted in accordance with a system for monitoring the competencies of health care managers and their motivation for professional development. In this way, the functioning of health structures and work organization will be improved, which is a prerequisite for quality and efficiency of medical care and a condition for economic stability of the medical institution.

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