

A SUSTAINABLE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM REQUIRES MANAGEMENT TRANSFORMATION

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Abstract:

In order to be the health care system sustainable , management transformations must be based on very precise diagnostic analysis that includes complete and current information. It is necessary to implement an information system that collects information in real time, that watches the parameters that significantly influence the sustainability of the system. Such an information system should point out a radiography(a scan) of the system at some time under following aspects:: 1. An overview of system; 2 An overview of the economic situation; 3 A technical presentation ;4. A legal overview; 5. A social overview ; 6. A management overview .Based on these X-rays of the health system, it outlines a series of conclusions and recommendations together with a SWOT analysis that highlights the potential internal (strengths and weaknesses) and external potential (opportunities and threats). Based on this analysis and recommendations, the management is going to redesign the system in order to be adapted to the changing environmental requirements.

Management transformation is recommended to be by following steps. :1. The development of a new management system that would make a positive change in the health care system 2. Implementation of the new management system 3. Assessment of the changes

Key words: transformation management, sustainable health care system, information system, strategic management, risk management.

Introduction

A sustainable health system is a system that is supported and developed in a balanced way in internal and external factors that influence the system. In the present context, the evolution of scientific and technical progress is accelerated and the Society is characterized by dynamic acceleration, the health care system has to be adapted to ensure continuous operation and to meet the needs of the environment.

Given the strong influence of the economic dimension of the health system, management must focus more on the economic results and not just on the technical and social results that involved.

"A health system includes all activities whose essential purpose is to promote, restore or maintain health" is the official definition of the World Health Organization (WHO). (The World Health Report 2000, 5).

This definition of a health system does not require any particular degree of integration and does not imply, necessarily, the presence of persons responsible for general administration activities of its components. But given the fact that populations' health is a national priority, the responsible for the health system performance of a country is the government, as general manager.

In the report on health in the world (2000, XI - XX), WHO proposes for the first time an index of national health systems' performance in trying to achieve three goals:

- (1) good health;;
- (2) meet people's expectations ("health systems responsiveness to patient expectations");
- (3) fairness of financial contribution.;

The degree of fulfillment of these objectives serves as the baseline to evaluate the performance of national health systems, but in turn, depends essentially from the extent to which health systems reach to fulfill four critical functions:

- providing health services;
- generating resources that make service delivery possible;
- raising and pooling resources used to pay for health care;
- the setting and enforcing of rules to provide strategic direction to all parties involved.

During the twentieth century, health systems have undergone a series of reforms. After the Second World War , Governments have created national health systems(NHS) and they developed social security systems

The aim of NHS is "health for all citizens". Even its many advantages, this approach has been criticized because it does not pay enough attention to health care demand .Because the perceived need and the demand for health services did not match, the first generation of national health systems failed. They were unable to relate the offer of their services to the manifested trends in demand and population needs in healthcare.

Since the 1990s, there has been a progressive evolution that WHO calls the "new universalism". Thus, instead of looking to distribute all possible health care to the entire population or to benefit the population below the

threshold of poverty , current trend is medical care to be given to all who need health care, based primarily on the criteria of effectiveness, cost and social acceptability

Such an evolution in reforming national health systems (even in developed countries) is a consequence of the profound political and economical changes in the last two decades of the twentieth century. These include the transformation from centrally planned to market-oriented economies, reduced state intervention in national economies, fewer government controls, and more decentralization.

Ideologically, this has meant greater emphasis on individual choice and responsibility. Politically, it has meant limiting promises and expectations about what governments should do.

It can be concluded that national health systems have played a large role in the spectacular extension of life expectancy during the last century. They have contributed enormously to the improvement of the population health status and they influenced the lives and welfare of billions of people in the world. These positive results confirm that the role of national health systems has become increasingly important. And as stated in the WHO report (2000, 7) health systems today is one of the main sectors of the global economy.

The person who needs medical care is obviously a consumer, but it can also be a co-producer of his own health, by respecting the rules of good nutrition, by exercising and applying medical prescriptions or recommendations.

Health is subject to important and unpredictable risks that are essentially independent of each other. These features confirm that health is entirely different from all other goods and therefore the disease insurance is much more complex than any other type of insurance.

Physical integrity and dignity of the individual are recognized by international law . National health systems, in addition, have the responsibility to monitor whether people are treated with respect and according to human rights

WHO identifies two important elements:

(1) Respect for persons includes:

- Respect for the dignity of the person.. This means not humiliating or demeaning patients.
- Confidentiality or the right to determine who has access to one's personal health information..
- Patient autonomy, namely the opportunity to participate in choices about his own health, including treatment that will be used or not.

(2) The attention focused on the client:

I . Prompt attention: immediate attention in emergencies, and reasonable waiting times for non-emergencies.

II. Amenities of adequate quality, such as cleanliness, space, and hospital food.

III. Access to social support networks for patients (family and friends).

V. Provider choice, the choice of the person about the organization from which will receive care.

A critical issue for health care policy is to define the term "health". Western medical model defines health as "absence of disease " (Blank and Burau, 2004, p. 52). According to this definition, people are healthy if they do not suffer from either mild or severe disease.

Another definition of health was given by WHO (1946), namely " physical , mental and social wellbeing , not simply the absence of disease or infirmity". This means that people are unhealthy if they are unhappy or unfulfilled personal or professional (Blank and Burau, 2004, p. 52)

Because health and disease have well defined social and cultural influences, it should be studied in a broad context, overall, the major determinants of major health problems:

(1) socio-economic background;

(2) health behaviors related to health risk factors: smoking, alcohol abuse, inadequate diet , drug addiction, physical inactivity ;

(3) Bad environmental conditions, especially the harmful effects of pollution (air, water, soil ...).

For some authors (D. Callahan, 1990, 103), good health population status requires systems and social networks not considered by any of the above definitions.

To achieve the three objectives that need to pursue a national health system, there is a permanent need to be better informed about the existing situation regarding the number and types of services, about the main obstacles to the equitable distribution of healthcare services. Simultaneously, we must know the national and local risk factors.

The role of management changes in the health system

In this context, health management system should make a goal to reduce ongoing costs obviously by fulfilling the obligations within the system. In this sense, economic indicators gets an important role in the management of the health system.

In order to be the health care system sustainable , management changes must be based on a very precise diagnostic analysis that includes complete and current information. It is necessary to implement a system to collect information in real time, a dashboard that watches the parameters that significantly influence the sustainability of the system.

Such an information system should point out a radiography(a scan) of the system at some time under following aspects:

An overview of the system - this scan(radiography) is intended to highlight the main features, to identify abnormalities and negative symptoms that may arise in the future .

An overview of the economy - the healthcare system is a system that requires significant financial and economic resources. Considering the amounts allocated to the health system, a change management should be in a continuous adaptation and take into account the economic dimension, especially in the current context;

A technical overview - the healthcare system has specific technical features in terms of objectives, has to ensure preservation of public health at the highest level and correction of situations that affect the health status of individuals in society.

A legal overview - the healthcare system works within the limits set by law and is extremely important to highlight the limits that it can work, in the case the excessive limitations of the healthcare system can be redesigned in a negligible way with the possibility to become unsustainable and not adapted to the requirements of the environment;

A social presentation - the healthcare system is a system with high social impact, a functioning health system, in addition to direct social effect has the role of increase the confidence of members of society both in the health system and state structures in general. For this reason the social component, the image and perception of the citizen is very important and influence the future sustainability of the system. A health care system that records errors and often creates a bad image, a negative attitude towards the members of society ,thus embarrass health management organizations to take decisions.

A management presentation(overview) - the management presentation is a complex form of presentation . Specifically, this presentation should highlight the goals, objectives, methods of action, resources and time as well as highlighting the estimated and actual deviations recorded. However, it is recommended and a methodological aspect analysis, decision making and organizational information to reflect the current components in order to be ameliorated or replaced.

Based on these X-rays of the health system, it outlines a series of conclusions and recommendations together with a SWOT analysis that highlights the potential internal (strengths and weaknesses) and external potential (opportunities and threats).

Based on this analysis and recommendations, the management is going to redesign the system in order to be adapted to the changing environmental requirements. In this regard must take into account that any change of system needs time to be drafted, implemented and generate the results expected. The main difficulty in this case is the time factor which is usually extremely limited .

The Change of the management (managerial change) is recommended to be by following some steps. Necessary steps that we should follow are:

The development of a new management system that would make a positive change in the health care system. At this step are outlined new goals and objectives in which the health care system must respond in the near future.

Implementation of the new management system which ensures sustainability of the health system. This step is important because the old system should harmonize with the changes that are required to perform. In this sense the current system must be prepared to allow implementation of changes. Interim measures are implemented to switch from the old system to new system. Next move to the effective implementation of the proposed measures, can be done in stages or in a direct, sudden manner.

Assessment of the changes has the role of compare the original estimates at the planning stage and the results of effective implementation of change, this step has the role of highlight the deviations that occur between estimated and realized causes and trends. As a result of going through this step shall be established a number of conclusions and recommendations for necessary actions that should be taken in the future. Future changes will have to remove irregularities and eventually causes that generate them.

Synthetic steps and mode of action on the implementation of change management to ensure the sustainability of the health system is represented in Figure no.

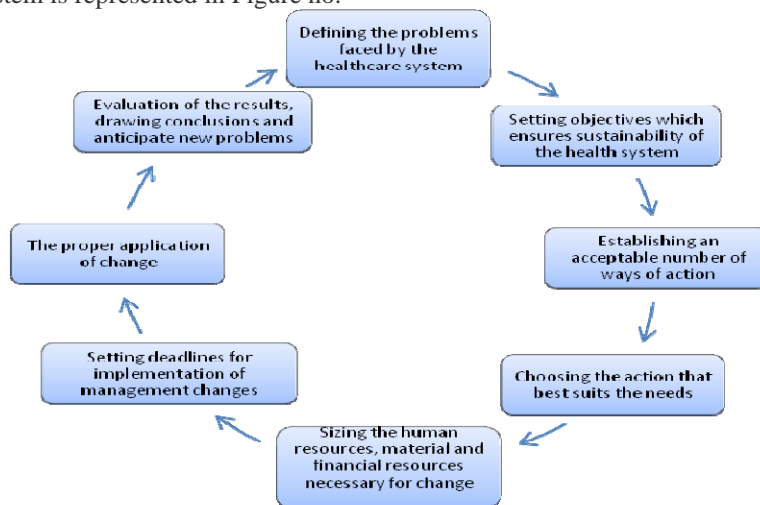


Figure no. 1 - Stages on the implementation of management changes

As shown in figure no. 1, to ensure sustainability of the health system, managerial changes are permanent, and this is influenced by how rapidly the environment is involved. This environment influences the adoption of significant changes in a very short time by the following factors:

Evolution in population growth, which entails the need for a developed and robust health care system;

Evolution of the lifestyle in a direction that requires extensive research on the present and especially future health of the population served by the healthcare system;

Dynamic economic environment with direct impact on the financial resources of central systems and thus on the health care system;

The impact of technology and resource consumption on the environment by destroying the natural balance which entails a negative response to public health and thus will require new health system costs;

The evolution of medical techniques, medical research and disease control that have direct impact on decisions for future action in the health system and which require the attention and impose a state of continuous alert

In addition to these items with direct impact on the sustainability of the health care system, a role increasingly important in change management plays risk management.

This component studies the possibility of occurrence of foreseeable situations that may affect the sustainability of the health care system. Risk management has the role of highlight the possibilities of action in advance in order to take measures to reduce risk factors.

This component of the health management system is a component of the prediction function and has a vital role in the sustainable development of the system. This component is intended to anticipate and prepare in advance permanent measures to adapt the system to new environmental requirements. In a context where time is critical, it is recommended the knowledge as soon as possible of the trends that will manifest.

Another important component in changing the management system is the implementation of strategic. Strategic approach takes into account changes in the healthcare system management that is done with the involvement of significant financial resources. For this reason, long-term approach is preferable because short-term management can induce a state of chaos in the system, that could affect the sustainability of the system state.

Conclusions

In conclusion, we can say that changes in health management are a necessity, a fact that guarantees the sustainability of the system. Adopting a conservative management and avoiding application of changes that forces the system to turn quickly to the needs of society does nothing more than to seriously affect long-term sustainability of the system. In this sense management has the role of monitoring the environmental trends on the health care system and to prepare adaptation measures and permanent change to the new system requirements

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