

# Managing conflict in healthcare organizations report

[Business](#), [Management](#)



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## **Introduction**

Conflicts are disagreements between two or more groups of people. The parties could disagree on principles, interests or responsibilities. Conflict is very ordinary and expected when individuals with different values and ideas work together. Due to the inevitability of discord, it is important to recognize the conflict, address it and resolve it sufficiently. When conflicts are not resolved appropriately, undesired effects may arise. When conflicts are correctly handled, it strengthens the relationship and trust between the involved parties. There are many different methods of conflict resolution. Choosing the best conflict resolution method is crucial to resolving the conflict. In solving conflict, no one strategy fits all. This study will examine the various conflict management strategies in healthcare organizations and

hospitals.

Delivery of health care is within a complex system of technology, professionals, and institutional environments, ethical, moral, and legal requirements. Other factors such as accountability from the community, quality of care, access to care and employment regulations affect delivery of healthcare. The stakeholders involved include the managers, executive officers, administrators, medical staff, other employees, patients and volunteers. Healthcare organizations recognize the need to manage conflicts within the institutions to ensure that conflict does not impede patient care and safety. While most conflict is preventable, conflicts that arise have to be managed appropriately to a proper working relationship. The approach to comprehending conflict among caregivers requires the understanding of the healthcare environment. Conflict resolution creates a more favorable environment for caregivers and patient .

## **Conflicts in Healthcare Organizations**

Disputes in the healthcare environment arise due to several factors. Some of the issues include the following.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Stakeholders in healthcare institutions regularly face ethical implications in the caregiving process. The primary moral code in the medical sector states that the needs of the patients outweigh all other requirements. Conflict usually arises between caregivers and families of the patient. Caregivers fall into conflict with patients regarding the type of treatment and the information that should be conveyed to the patient's family. Organization

decisions could come into conflict with an individual's moral inclination. The hospital's decision could be ethical, but the person may feel that they go against their moral code and religious beliefs. Conflict may arise when the organization regards financial obligations above the patient's needs. Organizations feel the need to balance profit with providing charity healthcare .

Some medical practices such as euthanasia and abortion cause debate within medical circles. Another source of conflict arises due to the patient's right to self-determination. Patients have the freedom to choose or decline treatment even regardless of the physician's views. Ethical conflicts cause discord between medical practitioners, patients and their families. Ethical problems impede the provision of quality health care to patients. Moral conflicts should be resolved by medical ethics committees. The committees comprise of lay people, medical professionals and clergy . The patient's perspective should be given consideration. Caregivers should undergo training in the code of conduct for health institutions. Physicians and the patient's family are also advised to communicate honestly .

## **Disruptive Physicians**

Employees in medical organizations frequently come into conflict with physicians. The conflicts arise because most physicians lack interpersonal skills. Physicians typically have low emotional intelligence, and this causes conflict with medical staff such as nurses and technicians. Arrogant doctors create strained relationships with other employees. Such situations create stressful work environments and efficiency of service drops. A dysfunctional

team leads to high turnover of staff. Communication between physicians and nurses breaks down. The doctor loses support among employees in the organization and ends up being isolated. The conflict takes the focus from the patients to the issues between doctors and staff. Other effects of this conflict include legal suits and sabotage .

Conflicts between employees should be handled with tact and diplomacy. Physicians should train in communication and interpersonal skills. Gaining interpersonal skills will help doctors understand other employees, communicate better with them and appreciate their effort in medical care structure. The management should set up a code of conduct for all medical professionals in the institution. Adhering to the code of conduct will prevent any conflict between employees in the organization. The hospital could set up a disciplinary committee to punish errant physicians who do not observe the code of conduct. Managers can act as arbitrators between conflicting employees when necessary .

## **Treatment Protocols**

Methods of treatment are a cause conflict among stakeholders in healthcare organizations. Other dynamics of treatment such as a physician's moral code, the patient's choice, patient's family and the effectiveness of treatment pose challenges. Previous experiences with patients suffering from the same disease may alter the judgment of caregivers even when the treatment method is effective. Some physicians could use treatment methods that are effective, but not approved, thereby causing conflict with other medical practitioners. The conflict causes a disagreement about what

is wrong or right for a particular patient. Physicians and nurses disagree about the type of treatment and the level of care that terminally ill patients should receive .

Conflicts about treatment protocols reduce the quality of care that patients receive. Medical practitioners are faced with the dilemma of choosing the right treatment or the treatment method that is satisfactory to all stakeholders in the organization. The disagreements also put a strain on the working relationship between interested parties in the medical institution. Utmost diplomacy has to be applied when resolving such conflicts. Conflict resolution committees consisting of doctors should be set up to address arguments regarding treatment methods. Managers should persuade physicians to follow the standard practices of treating a particular ailment. Managers could act as mediators between the warring groups in order to achieve a win-win situation for all stakeholders .

### **Institutional Conflicts of Interest**

Institutional conflicts of interest happen when the organization's financial interests and those of executive officials cause undue influence on decisions involving the organization's interests . Conflicts of interest arise when an organization seeks and receives gifts or grants from other companies. The companies may try to exert undue influence due to their financial contribution. Undue influence from senior officials causes a deviation from the core values of the healthcare institution. Therefore, conflict arises between caregivers and the management. Executive members emphasize the need to respects the financial relationships the organization has with

grantors and sponsors. Medical practitioners, on the other hand, will stress the need to provide quality service to patients, above, all other obligations . Institutional conflict of interest causes a breakdown of the working relationship between the management and medical staff. The quality of service given to patients will be affected by the disagreements within the institution. The conflict could cause mistrust between the caregivers and the administration. The caregivers feel that the organization gives higher priority to financial obligations than healthcare. When resolving institutional conflict, medical regulations and practices need to be observed. Government legislation and regulations from medical agencies have to be adhered to. An organization's code of conduct should be respected by both sides of the conflict. Managers could form a conflict resolution committee chaired by a neutral party. All the parties in the decision-making process are crucial in resolving disputes. Regular communication between the executive officials and medical practitioners should be encouraged to avoid conflict. Arbitration is necessary if other conflict resolution methods fail .

## **Resource Allocation**

The management allocates resources to different departments of the hospital annually. The resources include equipment, offices, finances and personnel. Resources are allocated based on the size of the unit, number of projects and proposed improvements. Conflict arises when a department perceives the resources assigned to be inadequate. Departments could view the allocations to be inequitable and on a level that does not recognize their ability. A department may feel that the personnel allocated are not enough

to provide quality healthcare to patients. The equipment allotted could also be insufficient for the diagnosis and treatment needs of the department. Budget allocations are the primary source of conflict between departments and the management. The organization's staff may also perceive the wages offered to be inadequate and relatively lower than wages paid by other institutions .

Conflicts that arise from resource allocation cause loss of morale among staff. Departments with inadequate resources will feel that they are not being appreciated enough by the management. Insufficient supply causes some projects to be abandoned. The quality of health care will be affected by the lack of resources and the low morale among caregivers. Disagreements between departments and the management cause working relations to be strained. Resolving the conflict is necessary in order for the hospital to operate efficiently and offer care to patients . The conflict can be resolved by having negotiations between the heads of department and the finance officials. The proposals from the departments should be taken into consideration. Departments could also be requested to cut on extraneous expenses in order to fit their needs into the allocated resources. Creating a resource allocation framework that is applicable and inclusive could help prevent distribution problems in the future .

## **Conclusion**

Conflicts are disagreements between two or more groups of people on the basis of the principle, responsibility or interest. The stakeholders in healthcare organizations are managers, executive officers, administrators,



medical staff, other employees, patients, and volunteers. Conflicts in hospitals need to be resolved appropriately to ensure that disagreements do not impede patient care and safety. When conflicts are solved correctly, it creates a healthy working environment for all stakeholders involved.

Conflicts arise because of ethical considerations, interest of conflict within the institution, treatment protocols, and resource allocation. Managers should apply diplomacy when handling managers. Committees should be formed to regulate the conduct of medical practitioners. Arbitration between conflicting groups is encouraged. Conflict resolution has the potential to improve the efficiency of care services offered by healthcare institutions.

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