

# Term paper on the role of today's health care manager

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



## **Abstract**

Health care managers or health services administrators are responsible for directing and managing operations in hospitals, nursing homes and other healthcare institutions. They are in charge of physical infrastructure, programs, services, staff, relations with other institutions and finances. Initially the above functions were performed by appointed physicians or other healthcare workers with little or no training in management, thus the ambiguity in the roles of healthcare managers. The healthcare managers also represent the institution in professional and community meetings. The educational qualifications and skills for this position vary from one institution to another as well as from one state to another which compounds the ambiguity in the role.

Some institutions require certification (licensing), others require a physicians training, and others require business administration or legal training while others require specialized training in health services administration. It is therefore necessary to demystify the role of the healthcare managers. This paper focuses on the specific functions of the healthcare managers as well as the educational requirements and skills for this profession. In addition this paper will explore the five common management styles employed not only by the healthcare managers but by managers in general. The term paper will also look at the common challenges faced by the healthcare managers.

The data analysis and presentation section will briefly explore the remunerations of the healthcare managers in various institutions. The final

section will draw conclusions and recommendations. Suffice to say that the occupation of the healthcare manager is very dynamic and wide thus the scope of this paper is limited to the sections mentioned above.

## **Abbreviations**

ACHCA - American College of Health Care Administration

ACHE - American College of Healthcare Executives

CEO - Chief Executive Officer

HR - Human Resources

## **Terms**

Autocratic management style - this is a style of management in which the manager makes all decisions and sets the goals without the inputs of other employees.

Bureaucratic management - is the style of management that is strictly guided by laid down principles and procedures.

Democratic leadership - is the management style that seeks and incorporates the contributions of the employees.

Laissez faire management style - is the hands of management in which the employees are not under the strict direction of the manager.

Mixed style of management - is the style of management that combines the other four styles.

Healthcare managers – are the health care professionals responsible for managing healthcare institutions.

Voluntary certificate – is a five year renewable certificate offered by the American College of Health Care Administration to healthcare managers working in nursing homes.

## **Introduction**

Since the establishment of the Pennsylvania Hospital in the mid-1700s healthcare organizations have changed significantly. The advancement in medical science, increasing specialization in the medical professions and the emergence of new technologies and state of the art equipments demand high level of organization and planning to ensure efficiency in the health care system. It is this ever-growing complexity of the health care system that has brought about the occupation of health care managers/health services administrators (Health Care Manager).

Initially physicians and other health care workers such as nurses were appointed to be health care managers with little or no special training. The profession of hospital administrator was first recognized as a separate field in the 1890s at the establishment of the Association of Hospital Superintendents today referred to as the American Hospital Association. The American College of Hospital Administrators (today the American College of Healthcare Executives) was established in 1930s to develop and expand the standards and education in the field.

Health care managers and health services administrators are responsible for directing and managing operations in hospitals, nursing homes and other healthcare institutions. They are in charge of physical infrastructure, programs, services, staff, relations with other institutions and finances. There are about two hundred and forty eight thousand health care managers in the United States of America 30% of them in hospitals. The health care managers have specific educational qualifications and competencies that enable them carry out their specific roles. In addition they employ different management styles to achieve their specific goals and overcome the challenges they face. Today's health care managers are not only trained on management subjects but are also informed on the various medical issues, ethical issues in the health sector as well as legal issues. Given the dynamic nature of the health care system and medical professions the health care managers are expected to be lifelong learners and flexible to keep abreast with and adapt to the changes.

## **Problem statement**

The role of the health care managers continue to generate a lot of debate especially because most of the functions of the health care managers were initially performed by appointed health professionals with little or no training in management. To that extent some scholars have asserted that health care managers are not necessary because they are an obstacle to flexibility, agility and efficiency (Mari 3). The restructuring and reorganization of the health care institution in the 1990s contributed to the ambiguity of the role of the manager in the healthcare institutions (Mari 3). This term paper

explores the roles of the healthcare managers addressing such questions as; what are the functions of the healthcare managers? What are the educational requirements and skills required for this position? What are the common management styles employed by the healthcare managers? What are the challenges faced by the healthcare managers? What is the salary range for this position?

### **Significance of the Study**

As earlier stated there is a lot ambiguity and confusion in the work of the healthcare manager, it therefore becomes necessary to define and evaluate the role of the healthcare manager. This study is helpful in informing the managers of their responsibilities, rights, privileges thus contribute to the improvement in their efficiency. The paper will help inform the managers on the various management techniques they can apply as well as how to deal with the challenges they face. Generally the study will demystify the role of the healthcare managers by exploring the various aspects of the job.

### **Roles of the Healthcare Manager**

There is a wide range of healthcare organizations today which include hospitals, nursing homes, medical group practices, rehabilitation institutions, extended care facilities, psychiatric hospitals, outpatient clinics and health maintenance organizations. In addition each of the healthcare institution has various departments and sections with specific functions. Healthcare managers are in various levels, some in charge of the entire institution and others in charge of departments, thus their roles vary with their jurisdiction and the complexity of the institution (Health Care Manager).

Generally the roles of the healthcare managers encompass organizing and managing the staff, equipments and auxiliary services. They employ and supervise staff, schedule the patient fee as well as the personnel shifts, handle budgets and establish the billing procedures. The administrators help plan space requirements, procure supplies and equipments, oversee equipment and facilities maintenance and facilitate provision of services such as laundry, mail, phones and other services for patients and personnel. They oversee operations in clinical areas such as nursing, surgery, dietary or therapy and administrative areas such as finance, procurement, maintenance and housekeeping.

The healthcare managers in many institutions have assistants who head various departments and to whom they delegate some of these tasks. The administrators work with the governing bodies of their organizations to plan and formulate policies. They may be directed by the board to implement large projects, such as planning research projects and fund raising campaigns, to develop and expand the institution's services. The healthcare managers convene meetings with their staffs to discuss the goals of the department and solve problems. They identify the training needs of the staff and organize training programs. Finally the healthcare executives represent the institution at professional and community meetings (Wallick 58-65).

## **Educational requirements and skills**

The educational requirements vary with the individual employer or facilitating board governing the institution. While some institutions require the administrators, especially the CEO, to be a physician most institutions

require graduate training in business administration or law and experience in healthcare. Currently specialized training in health services administration is available at the graduate (master's) and undergraduate level (Health Care Manager). The graduate training which includes course work and hands on experience as an administrative resident in an approved health institution has become a common requirement in the current healthcare system. The graduate training encompasses such areas as Finance, HR management, Patient care service, Government relations, Nursing administration, procurement, Marketing/public relations, information management and project management (Wallick 68).

The administrators working in nursing homes require voluntary certification from the American College of Health Care Administration (ACHCA) after meeting the educational and work experience requirements. This certificate is renewable every five years. Certified healthcare executive position is given to candidates who pass an exam and other requirements of the American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE). Requirements for licensing to work in nursing homes vary from state to state but continuing education is now required in most states. In addition healthcare managers must be analytical, tactful, team players, sympathetic, good in decision making, financially astute, organized, and political. As hospitals take a more business approach, that demand cost reduction and profit maximization, the demand for MBAs as a requirement for managers is increasing (Health Care Manager).



## **Common Management styles and challenges in Management**

The five management styles employed in the business world are also used in the healthcare system. The Autocratic management style is an old-fashioned style in which the manager makes all decisions without the input of the staffs [ CITATION LuInd I 1033 ]. This style is rare today as it requires the employees to merely obey the instructions which could be wrong. The bureaucratic management is one where the manager only makes decisions based on policies and procedures. It is common in sensitive areas such as laboratories and operation rooms. The democratic management style is the most common style of management today as it is very participatory and the manager engages the employees in setting goals, making decisions and solving problems. The democratic leadership enhances cohesiveness and team work. The Laissez faire management style is the hands off approach that allows employees to set their own goals, solve their own problems and make their decisions independently. It is employed in institutions with highly skilled and trained personnel. The mixed style of management combines the different styles in a blend that works best for the manager and the institution. The management style employed depends on an institution's culture, the manager's personality and the specific situation [ CITATION Min05 I 1033 ]. It is however worth noting that rarely is a single management style applied through out but rather the different styles are employed at different times and in different situations.

The healthcare managers face different challenges depending on the institution they work in. However the general challenges encountered by

health care managers include communication problems, disagreement among staffs especially with regard to shifts and division of tasks, combining the right characters in a shift, juggling the employees' needs and the board of governors' demands[ CITATION cla08 l 1033 ]. The training, personality and experience of the manager determine how well he or she can manage the challenges encountered.

## **Data Analysis and Presentation**

According to the U. S. Department of Labor the annual earnings of healthcare managers ranges between 66, 600 and 156, 050 dollars depending on the level, geographical location, size of institution, policy of the governing board and budget. The table below represents the earnings of the healthcare managers depending on the institution.

## **Conclusion and Recommendation**

Health care managers and health services administrators are responsible for directing and managing operations in hospitals, nursing homes and other healthcare institutions. They employ different management styles, face different challenges and have different qualifications.

The harmonization of the educational qualification of the healthcare managers would help standardize and demystify the occupation. In addition the salaries of the healthcare managers ought to be reviewed to be commensurate with their enormous responsibilities and to compare with those of their peers in other sectors of the economy.

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