

Challenges facing the health care industry



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This paper shall be focused on identifying the challenges that the health care industry is currently facing, as well as measuring the impact that such challenges have on the quality and quantity of health care delivery that is made available to people with different needs and requirements for their health. The main aim of this paper is to determine and discuss how the 21st century is now posing challenges to the delivery of top quality health care service all over the world, given the various factors that affect how and how much health care people are actually able to access.

In this study, the researcher will look not just at the availability of existing health care services in a particular society. There is also a need to know whether or not these health care services are able to answer the specific needs of patients in the context of the rapid technological advances that we have seen in recent history. Precisely because modern technology has been producing so many considerable changes in the way we live our lives, we must seek answers as to how such changes are actually affecting the ability

of health care systems the world over to bring their services to the grassroots level.

This study does not aim to merely discuss the many difficulties that the health care industry is going through in light of the changes that we are experiencing in the 21st century. Rather, it is the researcher's aim to look into these problems with a view to coming up with possible solutions that will enable health care providers, medical professionals and policymaking bodies to effectively identify and solve any dilemmas that they may encounter in the course of crafting health care policies and services that is suitable to the context of the 21st century.

At the outset, we can see that the problems that the health care industry is facing today can be roughly divided into two types. The first is that of the need for integrating technology into the current framework of best practices in the health care field, and the second is the problem of proper leadership for resource management. Now that we are faced with so many new technologies and ways of doing things, there is a need for health care organizations to reassess their corporate culture, values and strategies accordingly.

Integrating old methods with new ones will eventually give rise to a synthesized procedure that is more convenient, efficient and effective. For example, a seemingly mundane task such as record-keeping in hospitals is now being revisited precisely because information and communication technologies are now available for use in these particular settings. The key is to find the fit between practice and innovation, and it is this research that

will try to come up with answers as to how this can be carried out in the most cost-efficient and effective manner.

Review of related literature

This part of the paper will deal with the various sub-concepts that make up the bigger picture of the current trends in the health care industry with regards to the new challenges posed by the developments in 21st century society. As we have already seen, health care is becoming more and more important as people realize the value of taking good care of their health even before they are struck with ailments. The demand for quality health care that is affordable and accessible to all is a perennial problem all over the world, and the idea behind this paper is that even with the supposed good improvements brought about by technological advances, there are still barriers to making low-cost and effective health care available to everyone.

The nature of the research makes it important to have a clear background on the history and development of health care as we know it today, especially with regards to how technological advances and the concurrent changes in society have shaped our thinking about human health and the aid that medical science can provide us. A preliminary survey of the literature will show that the state-establishes health care institutions and policymaking bodies are at the forefront of creating health care support services and ensuring that most people, if not the entire population, is able to access such services.

Knowing the present landscape of the health care industry will give the researcher ample background information on how health care practitioners

themselves see the challenges that they are currently facing, given the needs and demands of their patients as well as the resources that are available to them. Moreover, situating the study within an existing context will help a lot towards finding the best solutions to the research question mentioned above.

A synthesis of all the relevant scholarly materials relating to the topic is likewise useful in pinpointing some of the more common considerations and questions addressed by previous researchers. Because of the bird's eye view offered by this section, it is hoped that a broad familiarity with the topic will be achieved. Moreover, the researcher is also able to present the topic in its societal context through a comprehensive survey of the literature, thus avoiding the tendency to isolate the research question into a sphere of its own.

Finally, the literature review serves to identify the current trends and relevant conclusions that have already been arrived at in previous research. Knowing what previous scholars have found out about the topic makes it easier for the researcher not only to situate the current study but also to pinpoint possible gaps in the literature, and to look for the with the best ways with which to approach such gaps.

This paper will use the systematic review methodology as the primary tool for investigating the history, development, and current status organizational success vis-à-vis the need for good leadership in the organization. The systematic review methodology has been traditionally used on primary data

about health care technologies such as drugs, devices and surgical interventions (Green and Moehr 2001).

However, there is already a trend among researchers to use this review methodology on other topics such as policy-making and social research. The Cochrane Collaboration was the first to implement the systematic review methodology to actually collate huge amounts of data that are put together in a regularly updated collection of evidence-based medicine databases. This kind of methodology affords the researcher more depth by allowing him to check on the previous findings made by other scholars and synthesizing them to create a map of where the current knowledge on the topic at hand lies.

Despite the usefulness of the methodology, care should be made in choosing the right electronic sources that can offer us with the most number of relevant researches, as well as in establishing the key words that will be used exhaustively for turning up previous findings on the topic.

For the purpose of this paper, several key words were used to search Google, Questia and other suitable online sources for information on the current trends in. The keywords used for the research are health care challenges for the 21st century, modern health care industry, new practices in health care, and challenges for health care practice. Other formulations of the main research topic yielded the same results and so only these four key phrases were considered for this section of the paper.

The review of related literature will also be divided into two parts. The first part shall discuss the importance of leadership and management strategies

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in general, while the latter portion is devoted to discussing the current context of the health care industry and the many challenges that it is facing. Specifically, the researcher will focus on the need the need to train health care practitioners as well as community members about the importance of quality health care delivery (especially in relation to individuals of advanced age) and to maintain a good number of competent and dedicated staff..

With this arrangement of the review of related literature, the researcher hopes to proceed in the exposition of the paper in such a way as to trace the development of the trends and practices that the health care industry is following now.

The value of leadership

Leadership can take various forms within the organization and can also achieve different effects. At any rate, the application of good leadership practices can be useful to motivate group members to achieve a common goal, or to manipulate their behavior to accomplish a particular set of activities that have already been agreed upon in the past.

Transformational leadership and organizational success has been the topic of various extensive studies in the past, and the common conclusion is that the former can have great impact on the latter even across different organizational structures and success criteria, respectively (Boerner et al. 2007). The issue of good leadership can only be appreciated in the context of an organization's ability to employ, train and manage topnotch employees as an important ingredient in their plan to improve overall organizational performance (Sims 2002). Organizational success is, therefore, inextricably

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linked with implementing the right human resources management practices that can lead to better individual and organizational performance.

But the concept of leadership within the organization does not pertain only to the top management, because the employees themselves also have to exhibit a certain kind of leadership style that can contribute to the achievement of the company's aims and objectives. This is because there is already consensus that the effective deployment of human capital is one of the ways by which companies can create competitive advantage that competitors will find hard to emulate or take away.

The dilemmas of the health care industry

According to the World Health Organization (2010), there are currently 600 million people aged 60 years and above all over the world. This figure is likely to double by 2025 and may even reach 2 billion individuals by 2050. A rather worrying aspect to this scenario is that the bulk of elderly people belong to developing countries who may not have the necessary funds, personnel and facilities to care for the older members of their community. The current population of elderly individuals are the baby boomers who have already advanced in their years.

It has also been noted that ageing is actually occurring much faster in these low or middle-income countries compared to the rest of the world, which means that they have a shorter period of time with which to build social support systems and infrastructures to deal with elderly health care.

Netting and Williams (2000) point out that the need for collaborative efforts between physicians and the families or communities in which senior individuals continue to live with is underscored by the fact that there are simply too many medical as well as psychosocial problems that elderly people have to live with, and too few people to handle them all at the same time. This is why there is a need to turn to community members to do their share in taking care of the elderly members of their population.

Management is also an essential part of the continued existence and success of these senior centers. Like other organizations, senior centers have to accomplish image building tasks, strategy planning and market research. Some senior centers are actually thinking about remaking the whole concept of the senior center as a place that is not just for old people. The main idea is to present the senior center as a hub of activity for the old and the young alike, offering activities that allow both to explore new learning possibilities and to socialize with other people of varying backgrounds and ages.

Another issue in the health care industry today is the high rate of turnover of hospital staff. Turnover, in and of itself, is a crucial problem in organizational studies (Dalton and Mesch, 1990). Turnover is usually defined as who voluntarily leave or transfer to another unit within the hospital (Duffield, et al., 2009). In the health care setting and especially in hospitals, there is always a need for a good number of adequately-skilled and experienced nursing staff to assist in the delivery of quality health care service, so staffing levels should always remain positive. However, the current trend is that new recruits, particularly fresh graduates of nursing, do not last long in their jobs.

This is more than just an isolated case of mismanagement or poor administration in a number of health care institutions, as the problem is becoming more rampant in different settings across the globe. In fact, in some countries like Canada, health care officials and scholars are already anticipating a nationwide nursing shortage, which is estimated to be at 78,000 by the year 2011 (Smith, 2008).

The high financial cost to the hospital management of rapid turnover of the nursing staff is also a driving force behind the need to effectively retain new nurses. If it were only such, less scholarly and administrative attention would be given to the matter. But consistently low staffing levels force hospitals to recruit and hire non-permanent workers, part-time employees and even travelers with working visas just to populate their wards and units with enough working people, costing them more than a regular and stable staff (Duffield, et al., 2009).

Most importantly, however, the lack of a regular and well-trained pool of nurses would impact negatively on the health care team's ability to deliver quality health care to patients (Halfer, Graf, and Sullivan, 2008). Nurses are very important in the delivery of quality health care because they are the leading partner of physicians in health care work (Chang et al. 2009). When nurse staffing is not at a desirable number and level of competency, unfavorable clinical outcomes usually come about as a result of the situation (Beecroft, Dorey and Wenten, 2007).

Methodology

Design

The study will use a survey methodology. However, instead of just focusing on the traditional challenges facing leadership and manager in healthcare organization, this survey will look at how leaders and managers must do with the 21st century healthcare challenges.

Indeed, this will go a long way towards validating the need and the efficiency to work with these new challenges. Interviews with leaders and managers themselves are needed to have a more solid grasp of how the new challenges will be addressed in their respective healthcare institutions. As we can see, the two step process will provide the researcher with a solid set of results that is more opinion-oriented because the nature of the research calls for a qualitative and case study type of approach.

Subject

The subjects for this study shall be chosen randomly, first by selecting the health care institutions and then by choosing the actual respondents who will answer the questionnaires. The respondents for the study shall consist of health care managers and leaders who have the necessary foundation in leadership training that is needed for solving the challenges mentioned above. The study shall be confined to the health industry in Norway only. The researcher will select five facilities in each region, based on organizational size maximum of 100. A total of 20 leaders and managers per institution will be selected through representative sampling to ensure that all organizational levels are brought in as respondents.

Instrument

As already mentioned, the researcher shall use a survey questionnaire as the main research instrument for the study. The questions will be of the semi-structured, non-standardized type to allow as much leeway as possible for the respondents to furnish additional answers or any clarificatory remarks that they may wish to give in the course of the interview.

Because the questions are only semi-structured, they are not designed to provide solutions for or to test a particular hypothesis. Instead, the questions will simply revolve a number of key themes, ideas and issues all related to the need to bring healthcare leadership and management to the next level in the face of the challenges of the 21st century. The interview is also supposed to more conversational and relaxed rather than structured within a particular rigid flow, because the researcher wants the respondents to be as comfortable as possible when answering the questions so that the answers elicited will be as spontaneous and candid as possible.

Results

This study will look at three kinds of data: the demographics of the chosen health care facilities, the survey data generated from the respondents' answers (both the evaluation sheet and the survey questionnaire), and the narrative accounts of mastering the new challenges. These will be collected separately, but in the end they will be integrated together to give a complete picture of how these new challenges are dealt by leaders and managers. The impact of these challenges on the healthcare organization will be analyzed. The results, particularly the findings from this issue, can be compared

against relevant international healthcare organization protocols for doing the same, if any.