

Governance and management in healthcare organizations: their different roles in driving safety and quality

Acknowledging that governance and management have different meanings and responsibilities is a great opportunity for organizational advancement. These two concepts are critical for organizations to achieve their missions and to reach their goals; however, they are very often confused by many in senior positions. Thus, we are talking about boards that help making decisions and assure ethics and compliance in the organizations, as well as overseeing quality and safety of care. In an era when we find nonaccountable organizations all over the world, not only in health, knowledge regarding accounting, and law, but conflicts of interests can also be discussed in learning encounters and simulations, with real-life laboratories and online situations. On the other hand, managers should be sure to learn soft skills, besides general management and health management tools and practices.

Governance is related to commitments and organizational strategy, assuming relationships with boards, shareholders, and all other identified or prioritized stakeholders [1]. Governance is driven by principles and can vary according to different theoretical frameworks. One way to look at the essential requirements is according to the 12 principles of good democratic governance [2]: (i) Participation, Representation, and Fair Conduct of Elections; (ii) Responsiveness; (iii) Efficiency and Effectiveness; (iv) Openness and Transparency; (v) Rule of Law; (vi) Ethical Conduct; (vii) Competence and Capacity; (viii) Innovation and Openness to Change; (ix) Sustainability and Long-Term Orientation; (x) Sound Financial Management; (xi) Human Rights, Cultural Diversity and Social Cohesion; and (xii) Accountability. In the XXI century, more than ever before, organizations are concerned with compliance, ethics, diversity, and transparency.

Management, on the other hand, deals with providing means for a safe and adequate care delivery. Managers have the specific tasks of obtaining resources, allocating, and monitoring their use to achieve organizational purposes. Management, where effective and efficient, is grounded in principles. In the early 1900s, the golden rules of the so-called scientific management [3] were established. They are still valid 100 years later but read under a slightly different lens [4]. Nowadays, effective management is strongly related to soft skills, all over the world [5], whereby communication is one of the fundamental skills; and, in our era of social media, the tasks related to disseminate information within the organization have changed from what was known 10 years ago. Additionally, key tasks include conflict management, process design, performance monitoring, and

continuous improvement [6]. At the same time, strategic management, related to value in healthcare, together with quality and safety, must be addressed.

Costs as sustainability, quality, and safety are managerial concerns, suggesting the diagnosis and correction of issues as overuse, misuse and underuse of drugs, tests, and different procedures. Since resources will never be enough for health needs, they must be used more efficiently within the services and with better outcomes, according to clinicians, managers, patients, and families, defined at the local level. Priorities must be set. All stakeholders cannot be equally satisfied simultaneously.

In the XXI century, even before the COVID pandemic, the health sector has been among the most affected by an epidemic of organizational disillusionment. It is easy to see many health workers leaving their jobs because of poor governance and management pitfalls. Among those are the inadequate strategy and accountability, inability to manage multiprofessional teams, as horizontal structures, and increasing power games that result in conflicts all over organizations, whose resolution is often more demanding than reaching organizational goals [7].

Managers should do managerial activities, achieve organizations' aims, and keep the staff motivated and engaged. Board members should help setting organizations' aims, besides profit and financial sustainability. Health organizations must be sustainable, but this should happen by rendering good and safe healthcare services and advocating for population health.

Governance and management need to be evidence-based. Formal training, monitoring, and evaluation are available and should be used. There are knowledge and research behind these concepts, and learning health systems are a possible way to interfere with organizational culture [8]. Contemporary knowledge presented in updated formats will help achieve better outcomes using sustainable healthcare processes in new health services in a changing world.

References

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