

Chapter 22

Hospital Units Merging Reasons for Conflicts in the Human Resources

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ABSTRACT

The necessity for the control of expenses of health and the reduction of cost, led the Ministry of Health and the government of Greece to the decision-making for fusions of hospitals units of health following the new tendency of health's policy that prevails also in other countries. The research purpose was to appoint the positive and negative results from the fusions of hospitals. Any changes in the health care system aim at the reduction of expenses, however, they constitute the most frequent causes of conflicts among employees. The Hospital is characterized as a natural space for the growth of conflicts. Despite the oppositions that are recorded as for the positive and negative results, it appears finally that through the fusions, resources have been saved, management systems have been improved but in the same time, conflicts in the labour place between the individuals and the teams recruiting hospitals have been aggravated.

INTRODUCTION

The human resources in the health sector is an essential chapter not only its quantitative but also qualitative composition. Although more and more modern technology permeates the health sector, health remains relatively an intensive labor. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) more than 60% of health expenditure is devoted to human resources. So issues that are related to the management and development of human resources in the health sector are of major importance (Liaropoulos, 2007).

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The health system is primarily a set of human relations and especially interdependencies. These relationships are hardly disturbed and even harder solutions are “positive sum”, where everybody benefits from possible changes. Health services have multi- professional structure and require corporation of an appropriate number of different professionals in order to have a satisfactory result that corresponds to quantitative and qualitative criteria (Liaropoulos, 2010).

It is obvious that in hospitals, which are complex organisms, there is a need for interdisciplinary cooperation, in order to achieve clinical goals related to the sick, and the other objectives related to management issues. The need for interdisciplinary cooperation increases the degree of interaction between health professionals and it is a fact that the more increasing the interactions are, the greater the possibility of a conflict. The maintenance of harmonious labor relations and the interdisciplinary cooperation are considered a necessity for health professionals, along with the performance of their duties (Stathopoulou, 2006).

Many groups interact and engage in conflicts during the provision of health care. The conflict is associated with human emotions, such as feelings of neglect and underestimation and indifference. The anger grows inside the person, which can be transformed into rage, and behaviors such as melancholy, or even violence might appear (Papadopoulos, 2009).

Feelings and attitudes that are developed impede the smooth execution of work and as a result the productivity is reduced and errors or omissions are made (Swansburg & Swansburg, 2003).

In a constantly changing society and with the current global economic crisis, which also hit Greece in recent years, the need for state intervention in the economy for the rational allocation of resources was obligatory, including the health sector, as well. Empirical studies record dramatic changes in the epidemiological map of the country, causing an increase in demand for health services and as a result increase the expenses of health care (Stiglitz, 2010; Adamakidou and Kalokairinou-Anagnostopoulou, 2009; Selgelid, 2007).

In times of crisis, when resources are limited there is a need for changes in consequent adverse situations, accompanied by stress, confrontations and conflicts (Likert & Likert, 1976). Conflicts within organizations are inevitable and arise because of rapid and unpredictable pace of upcoming changes, new technological developments, competition for scarce resources, differences in cultures and beliefs, as well as different human personality types (Brown, 1983). Factors such as the size and the complexity of the organization, the increased interdependence and the rapid social and technological change influence the cause of conflicts in a high degree (Bateman & Snell, 2004).

The right to health is a basic human right enshrined in the Constitution of the World Health Organization and most UN treaties and more recently by the Treaty (Roth, 2004) establishing a European Constitution (Article II-95 of the Charter the European Union’s Fundamental Rights) (European Union, 2004) which recognizes the right of every person to have medical care, and states that this right must be recognized through the laws of each Member State of the European Union, as a prerequisite to support the health system.

The establishment of the National Health System (NHS) in Greece under Law.1397 / 83 (Government Gazette 143A / 1983) came as an urgent need for the establishment of a modern health system responsive to the real needs and aspirations of the Greek population, ranking the country according to the World Health Organization in 2000 to 14th place in developed countries health (WHO, 2000).

The need to control health care costs and to reduce costs, as far as 10% of gross national product (GNP) is binded, led the NHS to decide for hospitals merging. Bed mergers and the rational allocation of human and material resources, following the new trend of health policy prevailing in other European Union

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