

Chapter 11

Healthcare Risk Management: A Marketing Approach

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ABSTRACT

For the healthcare organization, it becomes more essential implementing organizational measures that change the conduct of operators, through behavior and organizational culture, trying to promote the analysis of adverse events and thus to learn lessons from these events. Good risk management leads to safe care, which is also perceived as service quality. This is where the logic of healthcare marketing comes in, a tool that becomes necessary to communicate the quality and contextual safety of the services offered by healthcare companies. Marketing, which has long been neglected in health systems, plays a key role in this perspective. The user of health services must, in fact, be considered as a corporate client. This analysis aims to investigate how a more marketing-oriented approach in healthcare organizations can be particularly useful in promotion and customer focus strategies.

Safety must be one of the factors determining the quality of healthcare.

The aim of any health organization is therefore to raise awareness and increase the culture of “safe care” as much as possible.

It is essential for the companies to implement organizational measures to change the behavior of operators, to try to promote the analysis of adverse events, to learn from them and, finally, to use instruments able to communicate to public the efforts made in the safety research.

Good risk management leads to safe care, which is also perceived as service quality.

The users of health services must be considered as corporate clients in order to provide them with the highest quality, moving all those levers, both general and specific, determining customer satisfaction; that is the reason why, in the discussion, we will call them client/patient, implying them as synonyms.

In recent years, patients/clients have become more and more demanding; citizens are free to choose their place of treatment or their treating professional and the healthcare offer has become wider and wider, increasing competition for service providers.

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For this reason, the provider must increasingly take communication and marketing processes into account.

Researching how management can make use of communication - the cornerstone of marketing - becomes a priority for health systems in a so highly competitive sector, mostly because the customer appears to be particularly in need of information.

Present-day healthcare systems are like all complex organizations; i.e. they are deliberately constructed and/or reconstructed social units, with a structure of roles that are functional to the pursuit of certain objectives and explicit behaviors that allow these objectives to be achieved.

Complex systems, such as healthcare systems, can therefore be defined as dynamic structures - in permanent evolution - with a capacity for self-organization, composed by a large number of parts interacting with each other in non-linear ways that result in global behavior, which cannot be explained by a simple model (Czarniawska, 2007).

These systems therefore operate under conditions of uncertainty more frequently than in the past, and risks involving these systems have also changed.

Uncertainty is present in all human constructs and it refers to epistemic situations involving imperfect or unknown information. It applies to predictions of future events, to physical measurements that are already made, or to the unknown.

Uncertainty, as well as risks, are of course part of human life and their value is important in the organizations, particularly in the complex ones, such as healthcare systems. Precisely for this reason, at the present time, uncertainty and errors are part of the studies of risk management, i.e. the process of identifying, assessing and controlling threats to an organization.

Errors and uncertainty in healthcare, in fact, have a significant impact on the outcomes and on the patient care, precisely because of the complexity of the systems, not only due to failures, but also to human error.

Malfunctions, misinterpretations, errors, cognitive bias (systematic errors of judgment) and heuristics (cognitive shortcuts causing an error) can compromise the diagnostic process. Therefore, safety becomes one of the factors determining the quality of medical care.

Over time we have seen an ever-increasing focus on safety and the aim of every healthcare organization has therefore become to raise awareness and increase the culture of "safe care" as much as possible.

For the healthcare organization becomes more essential every day implementing organizational measures changing the conduct of operators, through behavior and organizational culture, trying to promote the analysis of adverse events and, thus, to learn from them.

This is when the logic of healthcare marketing comes in, as a instrument necessary to communicate the quality and contextual safety of the services offered by healthcare companies.

The healthcare system, over a long period of time, has traditionally been far from these logics, but, nowadays, risk studies, approaches to error and the ability to communicate to users are now taking on a new meaning.

Therefore, if we can say that studies on risk management, precisely in complex organizational systems, have had the tangible result of being able to identify the areas of risk and to determine procedures and standards to reduce the possibility of the risk itself materializing with a negative output for the organization, risk management, then, becomes a priority for every organization, which can be achieved by studying errors and devising a series of error prevention programmes (De Andreis et al., 2019).

Managing risks, in the health sector, (as well as in all complex organizations) means implementing a series of measures based on team management and the study of errors, as an advantage of operators

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