

Role of the Distance Communication Office Administrator: experience of the SAMIC Pediatric Hospital Prof. Dr. Juan P. Garrahan in the Distance Communication Office Network

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Abstract

Introduction: This article aims to describe the strategic importance of administrative human resources in the construction of the network Pediatric Telehealth Argentina and its work dynamics in collaboration with teams across the country and in remote patient care. **Method:** This writing was made in the Garrahan Pediatric Hospital of the City of Buenos Aires, Argentina. In August 1997, the first Distance Communication Office (OCD) was created from that institution, led by a medical-administrative team. The methodological strategy was the reflexivity on the own position in the field to be investigated through 3 focus groups of administrative OCD. **Results:** The technical-administrative tasks generated a remote link that allowed the construction of a collaborative project. In the culture of Distance Communication, there is a need to identify the skills and practical knowledge necessary to successfully integrate people, processes and technologies in order to guide the effort to create knowledge. **Conclusion:** The administrative human resource has strategic importance in the construction of the network and its work dynamics.

Keywords: Telemedicine; Distance Communication Network; Administration.

Resumen

Rol del administrativo de la oficina de comunicación a distancia: experiencia del Hospital de Pediatría SAMIC Prof. Dr. Juan P. Garrahan en la red de oficinas de comunicación a distancia.

Introducción: Este artículo tiene como objetivo describir la importancia estratégica del recurso humano administrativo en la construcción de la red de Telesalud Pediátrica argentina y su dinámica de trabajo en colaboración con los equipos de todo el país y en la atención de pacientes a distancia. **Método:** Este escrito se realizó en el Hospital de Pediatría Garrahan de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires, Argentina. En agosto de 1997 desde esa institución se creó la primera Oficina de Comunicación a Distancia (OCD) conducida por un equipo médico-administrativo. La estrategia metodológica fue la reflexividad sobre la propia posición en el campo a indagar a través de 3 focus group de administrativos de OCD. **Resultados:** Las tareas técnico-administrativas generaron un vínculo a distancia que permitió la construcción de un proyecto colaborativo. En la cultura de Comunicación a Distancia existe la necesidad de identificar las habilidades y el conocimiento práctico necesario para integrar de manera satisfactoria personas, procesos y tecnologías a fin de orientar el esfuerzo de creación de conocimiento. **Conclusión:** El recurso humano administrativo tiene importancia estratégica en la construcción de la red y su dinámica de trabajo.

Palabras-clave: Telemedicina; Red de Comunicación a Distancia; Administración.

Resumo

Papel do administrativo nas oficinas de comunicação a distância: experiência do Hospital Pediátrico SAMIC Prof. Dr. Juan P. Garrahan na rede de oficinas de comunicação a distância

Introdução: Este artigo tem como objetivo descrever a importância estratégica dos recursos humanos administrativos na construção da rede argentina de Telessaúde Pediátrica e sua dinâmica de trabalho em colaboração com equipes de todo o país e na atenção ao paciente à distância. **Método:** Esta redação foi realizada no Hospital Pediátrico Garrahan da Cidade de Buenos Aires, Argentina. Em agosto de 1997, a partir daquela instituição, foi criada a primeira Assessoria de Comunicação a Distância (DCO), liderada por uma equipe médico-administrativa, cuja estratégia metodológica foi refletir sobre a própria posição no campo a ser investigada por meio de 3 grupos focais de administrativo do OCD. **Resultados:** As tarefas técnico-administrativas geraram um vínculo a distância que permitiu a construção de um projeto colaborativo. Na cultura da Comunicação a Distância, é necessário identificar as competências e conhecimentos práticos necessários para integrar com sucesso pessoas, processos e tecnologias de forma a orientar o esforço de criação de conhecimento. **Conclusão:** O recurso humano administrativo tem importância estratégica na construção da rede e sua dinâmica de trabalho.

Palavras-chave: Telemedicina; Redes de Comunicação a Distância; Administração.

INTRODUCTION

The Children's Hospital SAMIC "Prof. Dr. Juan P Garrahan" is a decentralized, bijurisdictional legal administrative entity that depends on the National Health Secretariat and the Ministry of Health of the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires. It was inaugurated on August 25, 1987.

It was designed according to a non-traditional model in the organization of public hospital institutions, based on the joint care of patients by progressive care according to their severity and complexity.

It is a national reference center for children from birth to 16 years of age, with pathologies whose resolution requires diagnostic elements or treatments of greater complexity.

It develops all the pediatric specialties in outpatient and inpatient care. It uses image-guided interventionism, an invasive practice performed under ultrasound or tomographic control, which avoids conventional surgical treatment.

For the care of complex and stable patients, it has a day hospital, which among other things, avoids the hospitalization of patients with severe infections or who need low-complexity surgery, diagnostic studies, chemotherapy treatments and palliative care that improve the quality of life of patients through the relief of symptoms and family accompaniment of chronic or incurable diseases.

It is a center for kidney, liver, bone marrow, heart and lung transplants and cochlear implants. It has banks of valvuloarterial homografts, amniotic membrane, skin, bone, as well as a bank of umbilical cord blood from a related donor for the transplantation of progenitor cells¹.



Figure 1 - Dr. Mauro Castelli and Lic. Antonio Luna, first administrative OCD

In August 1997, the Office of Distance Communication (OCD) was created in the multipurpose day hospital area, which was born from an idea of the then executive medical director, Dr. Mauro Castelli.

The opening of OCD was the embryo of the country's first telemedicine program. Over the years, a network was built that now totals more than 300 OCDs.

In the development of these actions, the aspects related to networking began to be more and more relevant and to enrich the activity of the office. These aspects give a new meaning to the administrative task, so the administrative human resource acquires an outstanding role and we start talking about the medical-administrative model.

From its origins, the Distance Communication Office of Garrahan Pediatric Hospital has among its main objectives the promotion of the construction of communication networks and the interrelation between different health, academic and educational institutions in the country. From the beginning, it promotes new care and management processes to improve the quality and access to health from all Argentine provinces. This work implies the inclusion of state-of-the-art technologies that are constantly being updated.

It was established as an agile and effective mechanism to channel consultations of patients from the interior of the country and to solve them at a distance, in order to avoid unnecessary referrals and transfers - with the uprooting and the expenses that they imply - and to speed up and organize those necessary.

With a strategy of stimulating regional development, models similar to the OCD Garrahan were promoted and installed in health centers in different provinces in order to optimize communication between professionals and administrators for management and consultation at a distance.

In 2005, in conjunction with the Garrahan Foundation, the reference and counter-reference program was set up, which included the Distance Communication Program and other subprograms. The program continued to encourage cooperation between provinces and institutions, as well as working in the field with local reference points, promoting ongoing training of human resources, providing advice on hospital organization models and administrative management aspects, and encouraging the regionalization of care.

The interjurisdictional, inter-institutional and interpersonal network and the collaborative work continued to grow both qualitatively and quantitatively, and a care and training structure was built to promote coordinated care with the participation of care centers throughout the country.

At the end of 2011, the program "Development and innovation of an inter-hospital communication model for remote patient care and monitoring" began to be implemented, with the aim of strengthening the video-conference communication system among health teams throughout the country.

In 2014, the coordination of institutional relations created the Telemedicine Program to provide technical and administrative support to the Distance Communication Programs, the National Pediatric Video Conference Program and the Reference and Counter-reference Program. At the same time, it seeks to provide new channels for virtual communication between institutions and health teams, in order to increase, simplify and maximize the impact of information exchange.

In 2016, together with the Ministries of Health and of modernization of the nation, the task of designing, planning and implementing the National Pediatric Tele-Health

Program was undertaken, whose coordinating center is the Garrahan Telemedicine Program. This article describes the strategic importance of the administrative human resource in the construction of the network and its working dynamics and also provide relevant knowledge of the administrative field and the dimension of practices involving the setting up of networks of remote exchanges as well the medical-administrative work model.

METHOD

Within the framework of the administrative approach of the Distance Communication Office of the SAMIC Pediatric Hospital "Prof. Dr. Juan P. Garrahan", the impact and importance of human resources in the management of the network and the dynamics of its work was analyzed from a qualitative approach.

The central methodological strategy was to reflect on one's own position in the field to be investigated. The fact of reflecting on a practice of which one is a part requires a look at oneself and one's own work group, and implies the consequent externalization of that critical and comprehensive look in order to share points of view that enrich the reflection^{3,4}.

In addition to the strategy of reflexivity, we resorted to information from 3 focus groups of OCD administrators coordinated by a graduate in Public Policy Management and a graduate in Psychology during October and November 2018; 2 individual interviews (3); 2 observations (3) of the dynamics of OCD in the same period.⁵

Documents generated by the working group itself were used, especially on the profile of the OCD administrator.

The main question to be answered was the following: "How does the administrative role impact on the construction of the network and on remote patient care in collaboration with health teams?"

The aim is to highlight how OCD has developed a profile that has an impact on the quality of care and patient management and to describe how this contributes to the construction and development of the administrative network.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The technical-administrative tasks carried out, such as facilitating communication between professionals from different institutions and managers of everything related to patient care in the interior of the country, generated a distance link that was undoubtedly strengthened with the face-to-face meetings held both in the field and at Garrahan Hospital and the construction of a joint project. From the background described, it can be seen that the administrative human resource was not "captive" of its tacit knowledge and for that reason is permanently promoted to tasks of greater responsibility that stand out to achieve the objectives of the Program.⁶

Recognition in networking expresses the necessary acceptance of the other and highlights the capacity to operate or interact. The administrator/connector is recognized by others and his/her intervention is accepted because it is important to improve the quality of the service. Recognition fosters a new multidimensional vision that contributes to administrative change in health in a particular sense and highlights the specificity of this human resource in networking. There is a marked tendency towards innovation where strategic problems are prioritized when it comes to establishing connections. This innovation is nourished by the integration of the OCD with all the areas and services of the Hospital through the participation of the internal user in the development of a techno-integrated institutional policy. The dynamics of the work also allows the administrative team to act as a computer and moderator between the different actors involved in the daily task. In other words, the essential role of connecting the administrative human resource is given both inside the hospital itself and outside, in its relationship with the other centres in the network.

At present, the administrative staff perform three main functions:

1. They prepare the remote consultations that arrive and are sent to the different effectors of the OCD Network;
2. They assist the effectors of the OCD Network in the procedures necessary for the various steps of a remote consultation;
3. They manage the records of Garrahan OCD Hospital according to technical requirements and technological availability;

A fourth aspect that is being systematized to become an administrative resource function is training for network staff. Table 1 details the competencies required to carry out the functions that they have stated.

Table 1: Competencies of the administrative human resource

Internal and external user orientation	Acts as a facilitator in the services offered by the OCD Recognizes and alerts on opportunities to provide added value to both internal users (Garrahan Hospital community) and external users (OCD Network Effector Public Hospital community))
Teamwork and achievement orientation	It is oriented towards teamwork, prioritizing group objectives over individual ones Maintains the focus of the team's activities on key objectives and under the logic of working in Socio-Sanitary Networks

It is important to mention an obstacle that is presented for the administrative task, and consequently for the operation of the network, and it is the one related to the difficulties to generate new hires with this profile, and in other cases the instability of the transitory positions that are generated to fulfill the function. As developed above, this role has its own specificity that makes it difficult for trained and practicing individuals to be easily replaced.

CONCLUSION

In the culture of Distance Communication there is a need to identify the skills and practical knowledge necessary to successfully integrate people, processes and technologies in order to guide the effort of knowledge creation, focusing that, in the public sector, the efficiency of the service must be considered.

The administrative human resource has a strategic importance in the construction of the network and its work dynamics, being the human capital generator of a valuable resource and sustainable advantages in time as a determinant in the efficiency of the actions carried out in the organizations.

The role played by human resources in tele-health is often invisible and therefore little or not at all conceptualized, so it is very important to generate spaces for collective work and consensus to develop systematization of the administrative task, which leads to a hierarchy of the task and therefore values the role played.



Figure 2 - OCD administrators Garrahan Hernan Hamilton, Nicolás Agüero, Mariela Bermudez, Luis Aliaga, Analia Mastropasqua and Lic.

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