

Management for Doctors

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Management is a fine blend of many different subjects and disciplines that can be hard to define and even harder to learn. However, one can enjoy and benefit immensely by the art of management. Some people are good managers through natural ability, through their inner intuition and common sense; other can become good managers only through the sweat-blood and tears of years of hard work.

Management is not confined to the forewalls of the industry; it is indispensable everywhere whether it be a hospital, an educational institution, agriculture, army, trade-union, government administration, charitable institution, club or one's own home. Management is that "What managers do". Manager's role is like a Doctor or Physician. As a Doctor must be aware of all the systems in a human body, so the managers must have knowledge of all the systems in organization. In fact the manager is the dynamic, life giving element in every business. Anything minus management amounts to nothing.¹⁻³

The management of medical care is too important to leave to doctors, who are, after all, not managers to begin with. Doctors have responsibilities to their patients, employers, and those who contract their services. This means that the doctors are both, managers and are managed. Doctor's management roles often involve

responsibility for teams, people, and the resources they use. He must have a duty of care for the safety and wellbeing of patients when he works as a manager. All practicing doctors use resources and play a role in setting priorities, developing policies and making other management decisions. All doctors have an obligation to work with both medical and non-medical managers in productive way for the benefit of patients and the public.

Doctors and Nurses enter medical and nursing colleges to become Doctor and Nurses, not health managers or leaders nor they are taught during their course of study. When they begin practicing, they handle the patients effectively. When their caseloads increases, their lack of knowledge and preparation in leadership and management such as; in planning, organizing, delegating, motivating, communicating, and team work frustrates them resulting in undermining the quality of patient care and service.

There is no provision for providing managerial training in any health professional institute in Nepal. As a result, new graduates without managerial and leadership skills or experience are given a wide range of management and supervisory responsibilities. For example; a new doctor is placed in-charge of an entire district at the age of 25 years in most part of our country.

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It is not possible to set-out all the roles doctors take on as managers. But he must ensure that following minimum requirements must be fulfilled:⁵⁻⁶

- Systems are in place to enable high quality medical services to be provided.
- Care is provided and supervised only by staff who have the appropriate skills (including interpersonal, informational, and decisional skills)
- Significant risks to patients, staffs and the health of wider community are identified, assessed and addressed to minimize risk.
- Comprehensive and effective system for reporting all accidents causing injuries.
- Information and policies on clinical effectiveness and clinical governance are publicized and implemented effectively.
- All decisions, working practices and the working environment are lawful, with particular regard to the law on employment, equal opportunities and health and safety.

Persons chosen to lead and manage health institutions and programs should be provided with basic training by the ministry of health. To raise the quality of leadership and management in health care to be on par with that in business and industry will require placing bright young doctors and nurses, early in their careers in positions where they can learn and develop managerial and leadership skill and roles under the supervision of experienced professionals. This will help to some extent to save the loss of a life.

As an effective manager, you need a sound knowledge of the following:⁷

- Main clinical and other issues relevant to those you manage.

- Key skills and contributions of other health professionals.
- Roles and policies of local agencies involved in healthcare.
- Needs of patients, care takers and colleagues.
- Use and application of information and information technology.
- Nature of clinical and other risks.
- Limits of what is affordable and achievable.
- Principles of change management.
- Culture of organization in which you work.
- Structure and lines of accountability in the organizations in which you work.
- Principles of good employment practice and effective people management.

You should make sure that you and those you manage:

- Listen to patients and show respect for their views about their health.
- Always take seriously patient's descriptions of events.
- Provide information which patient or others need or want to know in a way they can understand.
- Respond to questions or inquiries honestly and fully, without compromising your duty of confidentiality.

At times doctors may not have the resources to provide the best treatment or care that all your patients need. At this point your decisions should be based on sound research information and in line with your duties to protect life and health. If you feel that a board decision would put patient at risk of serious harm, you must ask for your objections to be formally recorded and must consider taking further action even making them public.

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