

CHANGE IN HEALTHCARE – HOW TO SUPPORT AND LEAD IN A GOOD DIRECTION?

Healthcare is under pressure and faces major challenges in the near future. To meet the challenges adequate change is necessary along with cross-boundary collaboration over traditional profession boundaries striving towards creating the healthcare of tomorrow.

The healthcare system in general and hospitals in particular are complex with hierarchies and interprofessional teamwork, together providing care for patients. Due to the high level of complexity it is sometimes required to bring in outside perspectives who can pursue to understand the system as a whole and the interaction of its components. However, the involvement of external actors in healthcare should be handled with care and consideration to ensure the quality of the interaction.

Certain insights regarding the challenge of external involvement in healthcare can be collected from a change project at the clinic for reconstructive plastic surgery at Karolinska University Hospital, in which the author participated in the role of facilitator. The clinic, ready to change, wished to better utilise their operating rooms, to deal with the long patient queues and the economic pressure on the clinic.

The facilitator got to know the clinic and its staff through frequent observations and by interviewing representatives from all functions somehow involved in the surgery operations. Subsequently the facilitator had gained knowledge and confidence to summon the staff in workshops generating a common agreement on which challenges that existed and how these can be dealt with effectively.

Among several changes implemented, a representative example was the formalisation of following up on the time required for a surgery in relation to the estimated time along with the reason for finishing early or late. By measuring the outcome, a process of continuous improvement was enabled, dealing with factors causing delays and inefficiencies.

A key learning from the clinic project was the importance of participation and empowerment of the staff members, essential to achieve change in a sustainable manner anchored to the organisation. To deal with the many challenges at the clinic, the staffs' capability of cross-boundary collaboration proved to be crucial.

In regard of the facilitator's role and approach, the assets of humbleness and diplomacy played a certainly important role when building up confidence and later providing guidance in the process of constructing and implementing changes.

The clinic is soon to move in to the new Karolinska Hospital, facing the challenge of adapting to new circumstances and contributing to the healthcare of tomorrow. However, change is never simple in its nature but with the right tools and approach it can be used to further strengthen the individuals through empowerment and shape an organisation based on cross-boundary collaboration over traditional profession boundaries with the common goal to care for the patients in need.

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