Clinical governance—A system for better health care

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_While accountability and improvement have been eminent in health care systems for quite some time, there is probably no other time in history when the relevance and importance of these have been more advocated. Learning from our shortcomings and improving our health care system towards better patient care is the goal of clinical governance. I refer to it as the democracy of the health care system, in which all members of the health care team have the right to bring about positive changes.

_Accountability & learning from self-criticism

Accountability and learning from self-criticism forms the basis of clinical governance, which provides the framework for taking all the steps necessary to make the system more patient-friendly.

It is a cyclical process that once established can help to identify the decisive factors for the quality of patient care. When asked by one of my trainees when the mechanisms of clinical governance ensue in everyday practice, my answer was, "In a patient-centred practice it never stops".

It starts as early as the patient first contacts a practice or a hospital and encompasses the entire health care scenario, starting with welcoming and managing a new patient, ensuring his or her safety on our premises and advising him or her about all aspects of treatment. This combination is all about our transparency to the outside world, ensuring that arbiters and our patients can be certain of our quality of care.

More simply put, clinical governance is the umbrella under which we can provide the best care possible for our patients. It is a structural framework that incorporates all pillars of the health care system. There are channels for the health care team, management and patients alike. Particularly for the last, clinical governance provides an environment free from potential hazards. In addition, patients are given a voice in the system through patient feedback, ensuring that if they draw attention to any wrongdoing, lessons are learnt and such mistakes are not repeated.

_Training and career development

For our staff and team members, clinical governance ensures that they will be inducted into the sys-

tem effectively in the beginning and be a part of that system through organisational meetings and their annual appraisals throughout their whole career. This way, they will have the best opportunity to improve their skills and advance their professional development. Moreover, this allows them to better judge their clinical effectiveness and communication skills.

Since training and career development are integral parts of clinical governance, it helps the clinicians to identify their learning needs and plan their continued professional development accordingly. Continuing in this loop, they are able to develop improved awareness about the safety of their work environment, as risk management is one of the basic pillars of clinical governance. Through research and development opportunities, they can also learn new skills and treatment protocols.

_Keeping all involved units in the loop

Clinical governance is the girdle of an organisation in a health care system: it encompasses all aspects of improved patient care and keeps all involved units in the loop. The management of an organisation can monitor the quality of care provided by it. It can also rate the clinical effectiveness of a particular specialty or clinician. With patient feedback, it can furthermore identify any shortcomings in the system. It will compel the organisation to strive for the professional development of its employees, safeguarding the clinician's right to develop professionally. The impartiality of the system opens the organisation to scrutiny and maintains the absolute system of checks and balances.

Audit is an indispensable part of clinical governance, as it allows the system to self-analyse and induce changes, if needed, that is, we make improvements and then re-audit. Once this cycle has been initiated, it will become a continuous process of re-analysis and improvement. The prime feature of this system is that the whole process is self-sustainable once the system has been implemented. The checks and balances in the system will keep it going and evolving.

The process of clinical governance is quite well-established in the Western world, but it is time that this essential system of health care delivery becomes established in developing economies. After all, it is all about the patients: it is to ensure their continued good care that we study intensely and pursue professional development._

about the author

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Kurz & bündig

Verantwortung und Verbesserung im Gesundheitssystem sind heute relevanter und wichtiger denn je. Das Ziel von klinischem Management ist es, aus Schwächen zu lernen und eine stetig verbesserte Patientenversorgung zu gewährleisten. Klinikmanagement beginnt beim ersten Patientenkontakt, der Begrüßung und Versorgung eines neuen Patienten, die Sicherstellung seines Wohlergehens und Einweisung in alle Behandlungsaspekte. Innerhalb dieses Systems haben Patienten die Möglichkeit, Rückmeldung zum Management und zur Behandlung zu geben. Dies ist wichtig, um Schwächen im System ausfindig zu machen und es weiterzuentwickeln.

Für Personal und Teammitglieder gewährleistet Klinikmanagement eine effektive Einführung ins System und Anteilnahme durch Organisationstreffen und jährliche Bewertungen. Auf diese Weise haben sie die Möglichkeit, ihre Fähigkeiten zu verbessern und ihre berufliche Entwicklung voranzutreiben.

Klinikmanagement ist somit wie der Gürtel einer Organisation innerhalb des Gesundheitssystems: es beinhaltet sämtliche Aspekte der Patientenversorgung und bezieht alle Beteiligten in den Kreislauf der Selbstanalyse, Verbesserung und Überprüfung mit ein. Ist das System erst einmal implementiert, funktioniert es gewissermaßen selbsttragend – durch Gewaltenteilung und gegenseitige Kontrolle.

In der westlichen Welt ist Klinikmanagement ein bereits gängiger Prozess. Nun ist es an der Zeit, dieses wichtige System auch in Entwicklungsländern zu etablieren.