# THE ACADEMY OF ECONOMIC STUDIES IN BUCHAREST



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# INNOVATIVE MODEL OF PROFESSIONAL TRAINING OF MEDICAL STAFF WITH MANAGEMENT FUNCTIONS IN THE HEALTH SECTOR IN ROMANIA

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**SUMMARY**

The health services sector in any state has the role of ensuring the health of the population through health services provided universally and at the highest standards of care, according to the UN definition. A complex system with multiple roles, the health sector provides the foundation of a nation, regardless of its form and level of economic, social and political development. Citizens' health is the basic condition for optimal results in all fields of activity. The health system turns and determines, through the value in the work capacity of the inhabitants, the level of performance and economic stability for several reasons: it represents an important employer on the job market, it exerts a significant influence in terms of the results of the activity of other economic sectors and social, reduces social exclusion and the phenomenon of discrimination. It is known that the health and well-being of citizens contributes decisively to the socio-economic progress of a country and, to the same extent, economic security and social cohesion influence the health environment. The lack of human and material resources of health systems hinders, especially in troubled and uncertain times, reduce people's health status and push the system to innovation and strategic change by adopting technological alternatives: telemedicine, social distancing, wearing masks and imposed quarantine, home work, telework, etc. Investment in the health system should not be seen as an economic burden, but as a contribution to the growth and stability of the economy over time, additional preparation for unforeseen events.

In order to ensure the efficiency of the health activity, the competent authorities and to focus their efforts on increasing skills in order to increase both medical and administrative and managerial performance: the access and availability of the population to high-quality healthcare at affordable costs are improved, are reduced inequities in the delivery of health services. The modern management of a health system is achieved through realistic planning, fair organization of activities, monitoring and evaluation of all flows related to the health process, making correct, ethical, realistic and forward-looking decisions (Gupta, 2022). Demonstrating its value, health management practices high standards, participates in the integrated development of activities, contributes to covering all requirements in the health and care sector, ensures the quality of the medical act and satisfaction for all - medical institution, staff, patients. The European Union promotes life-long education, as the Anglo-Saxon authors refer to "development" and "education", which is in common with the concept of Continuing Medical Education (Gallois et al., 2013). The constant of the approaches is that, regardless of the model of education and training adopted, the responsibility of professionals in their

professional development and in evaluating the impact of training on their practice remains the fundamental principle. The goal is to improve the quality and safety of patient care, a major ethical issue in medical practice. Awareness of the high degree of complexity of the field of health management, has gained increasing importance and has given education in this field its due importance. More and more research studies have as their objective the analysis of the most suitable type of professional training in the field of health management, capable of providing superior results, and which type will lead to the most suitable type of leadership for the creation of a performing health organization in the provision of health services health. These concerns are also reflected in this paper with an emphasis on the theoretical aspects and the practical implications generated by education in the field of health management. Public health experts are also the ones who explain that the aspects related to public health policies, medical personnel and trainers in the field of health, the authorities in the health system and those in the educational environment are, together, those who must join hands in a collaborative partnership to design and implement realistic educational programs and policies, for which systematic evidence indicates clear public health benefits (Hahn & Truman, 2015).

***The fundamental purpose*** of the present work is to contribute to the educational process of professional training in health management in Romania by developing and proposing a standardized, theoretical and practical reference model for the professional training of medical personnel with management positions in a health unit. Interest in the study of health management education came from two considerations. In Romania, in the professional training curriculum of a doctor there are no initiatives for the preparation and training of an employee to occupy a leadership position in a health organization and no notions are taught about the culture of the medical leadership position. In other words, a person with professional training in the field of management, with an interest in his development in the field of health management, is not familiar with what a quality medical act entails, at higher standards according to international guidelines, and even less with the typology of health facilities. In order to solve this discordance that appears in the professional training of health managers, a standardized, theoretical and practical educational program model is developed and proposed to the authorities, addressed to the training of medical personnel who hold a management position in a health unit in Romania.

***The main objective*** of the doctoral research consists in the *design of a standardized educational program model and its proposal to the Romanian authorities for the professional training of medical personnel who hold management positions in a Romanian health unit*. The development of the study goes through several stages, namely: ♠ documenting the specialized

literature in the targeted research segment, ♠ consulting the point of view of the medical staff who occupied in the past or currently holds a management position and obtaining their points of view, ♠ integrating the opinions expressed by patients regarding the satisfaction and degree of appreciation of the quality of the medical services they have benefited from in public or private health facilities in Romania.

***The secondary objective*** of the doctoral research aims to analyze the critical skills and the process of professional training in health management of the personnel with management functions within a medical institution by documenting the types of approaches for the development of leadership skills and abilities. For this purpose, in a systematic analysis of the specialized literature, different types of educational programs conducted at the international level are documented and compared. The research approach was extended to the deployment protocol and the results evaluation process, followed by the description of the professional training educational program by hospital staff with management positions. Finally, it was highlighted which educational intervention demonstrated the most beneficial results over time.

The identification of the managerial characteristics of the profile of the employee with management positions was facilitated by carrying out a set of 7 interviews addressed to the medical personnel who occupied in the past or currently hold a management position in a public or private health unit. Demographic data and information regarding the professional training held by the employee interviewed until now were recorded, their own perceptions about the challenges and difficulties of exercising the leadership function, about personal motivation and that of the employees, about the achieved successes were analyzed. In addition, subjective judgments were collected and studied regarding the usefulness, willingness to follow and the most suitable structure for a standardized national educational program, of reference at the national level, in the field of health management.

The analysis of the effects of the implementation of the professional training model addressed to the training of personnel with management functions in a medical institution was carried out by identifying the appropriate evaluation methods for this educational program by: surveying patients and integrating their point of view regarding the health services they benefited from their hospitalization. A good leader in the field of health knows that the degree of satisfaction of the patient - user of medical services, decisively influences the performance of the hospital he leads. Beyond the objective analysis of variation in health indicators compared between hospitals and different time periods; for increasing the level of performance of organizations, the degree of satisfaction and satisfaction of the patient matters.

Knowing the aspects of patients' dissatisfaction that limit their return to the same hospital or eliminate the possibility of recommending the same healthcare facility to their relatives, can improve healthcare conditions and, therefore, the performance of the entire medical system. Taking as a starting point the epidemiological situation of the last three years, the current socio-economic context and the relevance and topicality of the chosen subject, the doctoral research was built to provide support through the theoretical framework corresponding to the validation of the research hypotheses. The scientific approach is guided by a general hypothesis and three specific hypotheses.

The research hypotheses of this work represent part of the observations made during the research and, at the same time, an original and assumed point of view of the author:

**General hypothesis**: The elaboration and implementation by the Romanian authorities of a standardized educational program, of reference at the national level, addressed to the medical personnel occupying management positions in the health units, optimizes the performance of the hospitals.

**Specific assumptions**:

***Hypothesis 1***: *There is an international interest in the professional training of personnel occupying management positions in hospital units, and the measures taken by the authorities in the form of educational training programs in health management have increased the performance of hospitals.*

***Hypothesis 2****: In public and private hospitals in Romania, the need for a uniform management at the national level is felt, oriented towards the same objectives and values for the fulfillment of a common mission, in the form of an activity guide.*

***Hypothesis 3****: The problems and challenges that require addressing in the patient's opinion, which are directly related to the degree of his compliance with the therapeutic approach proposed during a hospitalization, are directly influenced by the academic performance and social skills of the medical staff.*

The reasoning in favor of validating research hypotheses is based on theoretical arguments and practical application arguments. To illustrate the theoretical arguments, a research study was carried out by means of a systematic analysis (Study 1). In this sense, three international databases were studied for publications that describe educational actions carried out at an international level with the aim of professionally training leaders in the field of health with the common mission of increasing the performance of health organizations. Interest in professional training in health management has become evident (Ackerly et al., 2011). After a detailed analysis of the professional training programs available abroad for the

staff with management functions of a medical institution, the research focused on identifying a model of professional training to highlight possible effective methods of implementation and standardized means of evaluating the effectiveness of the implementation this model. The study concluded that there are health management educational programs in the international space, developed and tested with regard to the training of medical personnel who hold management positions, where positive aspects can be noted that can be implemented in Romania. There are also notable socio-demographic and cultural differences specific to certain geographic areas. In addition, health systems in certain states have other forms of organization. Added to these differences are the specifics of medical and sanitary units in Romania, the typology of each unit in terms of size and activity profile.

A competent and functional health system designed and practiced by real leaders with leadership positions in the medical field, can be the basis for the existence of a population with clearly superior health indicators, a population that can support an economic growth that has become so vital today. Thus, types of approaches were analyzed for the development of the skills and abilities of the personnel with management functions in the health units, data that have been published in the specialized literature until now and the basis of these observations can be used as a pilot study for the design of a research that to establish the most cost-effective educational program. As postgraduate medical education undergoes rapid changes, through innovation and changes in professional training curricula for a medical leadership position, a constant process of evolution has been identified. The call by medical leaders for responsible continuing medical education has allowed for the introduction of competent staff in professional training, which has led to the current transition to flexible and individualized curricula. In addition to educational effects, these innovations and changes have a strong impact on hospital organization. For more arguments, two studies were carried out: a descriptive research face-to-face investigation (study 2) elaborated on the basis of interviews conducted with medical staff with management positions in the hospital and a cross-sectional study (study 3) which investigated the appreciation of patients receiving hospital medical services in our country. The research instrument consisted of a specific set of questions answered by interview participants. In study 2, demographic data were recorded, respondents' perception of training in the field of health management, subjective assessments of personal motivation, but also that of the employees of the health unit where they work, difficulties and successes in professional activity, the importance of evaluation from patients, as well as the availability to follow an educational program in the field of health management. In the end, valuable and relevant suggestions were made for the proposal of an educational

program with the aim of increasing the performance and quality of the medical assistance provided by the health unit run by the interviewed persons.

The research method used in the cross-sectional study (Study 3) was the online survey and the research instrument on which it was based was the questionnaire answered by people who were patients and received medical services in public health facilities or private. The questionnaire, consisting of 40 single-answer questions, recorded demographic data of the population sample that completed the questionnaire and other aspects deemed relevant to the research. The data referred to perceptions about the communication with the nurses/doctors who cared for them during their stay in the hospital, the responsiveness and promptness of the medical staff, the information received at discharge and the communication about treatment in the hospital and at discharge, financial aspects and the hospital's equipment in who were patients, the cleanliness of the hospital, the overall rating of the hospital, the overall satisfaction felt and the willingness to recommend the respective health facility to relatives and acquaintances. Patient involvement is a desirable quality of healthcare (Coulter, 2005) and a frequently debated goal for healthcare organizations. This aspect focused on the relationship between patients and medical staff in making care decisions or how to improve patients' efforts to manage their own care (Coulter & Ellins, 2007). However, greater patient integration efforts have been reported in the literature, including efforts to improve or redesign healthcare delivery by integrating patient experiences (Boivin et al., 2014). They are due to the increased recognition and acceptance that users of health services have an important role, the necessary expertise and an important contribution to the design and delivery of health services (Bradshaw, 2008). While the nature of patient involvement may vary from including patients as members of a board to time-limited consultation with patients on the redesign of a particular health service, the main objective remains constant: improving the quality of care (Pomey et al., 2015). Specialized works published in recent years that address the activity of the medical system indicate that the professionalism and promptness of the medical staff is negatively influenced by the large number of patients who go to the emergency departments, especially taking into account the lack of health facilities and especially of general practitioners, on large geographical areas, especially in rural regions, due to the lack of funds for consumables, medicines and equipment for diagnosis and treatment in existing hospitals. What over time was considered an advantage for patients is the fact that they can seek and receive medical services for any new health problem by going to the hospital as an emergency, even if they are not insured in the national insurance system of health, over time has proven to be the biggest disadvantage, both for the ability of the medical

staff to cope with an increasing workload and the way to solve complex medical cases. County and city emergency hospitals, in addition to family medicine offices, represent the basic health units at the county level, but only hospitals have the ability to treat emergency cases free of charge, for all social categories of patients, regardless of their status of employed or insured.

The application of a uniform and integrated management system for healthcare units in Romania is not a new concept for medical personnel, but legislative and bureaucratic barriers negatively influence its implementation and functionality. Among the most frequent challenges faced by health leaders at the national level are: ♠ high operating costs of health facilities, ♠ lack of funds for scientific research activities, ♠ lack of transparency of budget execution, ♠ lack of reporting of performance indicators, ♠ the lack of availability of activity reports for hospitals, ♠ a perceived reluctance on the part of the staff with management positions in healthcare organizations to use new management techniques and strategies to evaluate the quality of medical services provided to patients, ♠ the performance of employees or the technology of medical activity in practice current.

The major interest of a health unit manager is focused on evaluation, self-evaluation, financial education and transparency of activity and control reports to facilitate the increase of performance and quality of medical care provided within the hospital he manages. The translation from theory to practice in the current context is a difficult transition slowed down by the lack of norms, the low interest to perform, the level of salaries, etc.

Regarding the practical implications, the perspectives outlined in the paper open up opportunities for the design and implementation of change processes in the professional education in the field of health management of personnel with managerial positions or those who will hold such a position in the future. When implementing innovations or making organizational changes, it is proven that change management strategies are a good starting point. Furthermore, given the complex organizational framework of hospitals, change can only be initiated with the help of competent authorities and hospital stakeholders already involved in health management medical education, as well as those from other similar organizational systems. This means that, in practice, there is a need for awareness of the importance of the performance of medical activity in Romania, a general call for change. Change always starts with thorough analysis of the situation, from the perspective of all stakeholders. The recommendation for future research is to take into account the degree of complexity when exploring the mechanisms that influence the organization of hospitals, when making fundamental changes in postgraduate medical education in the field of health

management, with an emphasis on the specifics of each type of health facility and services medical services they offer. Although the main concern in health systems is mainly aimed at protecting the health of the population, there are numerous economic and social implications, often ignored until now. An important effect of this aspect remains everyone's contribution to changing the perception - from health organizations that represent only a source of expenses, to assimilating them with mechanisms that favor economic stability and the image of the basic pillars for achieving social and economic well-being. The contribution from the Annexes should also be emphasized, which develop in detail the research method and leave to the discretion of the reader space to identify the originality of the approach and the maturity of the effort developed.

***Key words****: health management, education, professional training, medical staff with management functions, performance, critical competence, patient satisfaction, relationship professional training - performance in health.*