

## **“The Main Issues and Concerns Faced By Healthcare Institutions Directors In Republic Of Macedonia”**

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### **I. Introduction**

The healthcare system is considered as one of the most complicated in a society. Therefore, its successful functioning represents an imperative that has to be fully accomplished in a timely manner.(1) Leadership is a process through which the institutional manager influences the employees within the institution as well as other people; s/he inspires them, motivates them and leads their activities towards the realization of institutional goals and aims. (2) It is an activity that is realized by the director or another authorized person to lead and govern the healthcare institution. (2)

The healthcare system in general, its management and development is increasingly drawing the attention of the society. (3) Directors are faced with a huge challenge of comprehending the world we live in, in a more transparent way. (2) They should also be able to predict the future and possible upcoming changes. (2)

### **II. The Purpose Of The Paper**

The purpose of this paper is to identify the most important issues directors of healthcare institutions (CEOs) face, the level of pressure that create these issues to the top management -directors of healthcare institutions and to identify the specific areas of concern included within each of these issues.

### **III. Methodology**

This study was based on primary data sources collected and obtained from a semiannual anonymous survey realized with directors (CEOs) of university clinics in Republic of Macedonia, during the first six months of 2018 respectively from January until June 2018. The survey questionnaire was sent to all university clinics while response was obtained from 30 of them. The collected data were analyzed and processed in the most appropriate way to fully comply with the purpose and objectives of this study.

During the survey, the respondents were asked to list the most important issues and greatest concerns that had emerged within the clinics they manage. The ordering was supposed to be done based on the pressure level that these issues cause to the surveyed directors of the respective clinical institutions. In addition, they were required to identify specific fields of concern within the main issues identified as problematic.

### **Results**

The following results were acquired from this study, carried out through the semiannual survey with directors of university clinics as public healthcare institutions of the tertiary level:

- 1. With regard to the issue the respondents consider as the most important and challenging**, based on the data gathered from the realized surveys, the latest ranking of the first half of 2018 shows that **university clinic directors ranked financial issues as the most important**, even though the level of their concern varies in years and in specific items.

**These quite challenging issues have been presented in the following chart**, in which **the average qualification** given for each of the ranked phenomena has been used for the systemization and ranking based on **the level of pressure that they cause to the managing staff of university clinics**. The higher values in the chart reflect the higher level of expressed concern.

**Chart 1. Most important and influential issues in university clinics in the Republic of Macedonia**

Nr.	Phenomena	From January until June of 2018
1.	Financial challenges	9.7
2.	Patients’ security and quality of provided healthcare services	9.2
3.	Governmental regulations/norms	9.1
4.	Patient satisfaction with healthcare services	8.9
5.	Physician – institution relationship	8.3
6.	Technology	8.1
7.	Population health management	7.8
8.	Care approach	6.9

According to the data in the chart, **directors are less concerned about the management of the population’s health compared to the patient satisfaction with healthcare services provided by the medical staff.** On the other hand, **managers are far more concerned with the level of security of patients and the quality of healthcare services, namely the successful implementation of healthcare reforms,** rather than **the relationship between the physicians and the institution where they work.**

**2. With regard to the identification of specific fields of included concerns within each of these issues,** the respondents ranked their concerns related to the three main issues/phenomena, shown in the previous chart, which they considered as the most important and which the managing staff of healthcare institutions are faced with.

**They were required to choose and rank up to five upsetting aspects of these main categories.** The following charts show these specific concerns in the three most important categories, ranked in accordance with the results of this study.

**Chart 2. Specific concerns related to the phenomenon of financial challenges**

Nr.	Financial challenges (n=30)	% of the number of respondents n=30
1.	Change of the current model – from quantity to quality	97%
2.	Reimbursement of medical care (including adaptability and payment deadlines)	86%
3.	Bad debts (including the unconsolidated emergency department and other payments)	75%
4.	Increased staff expenses, supplies, etc.	74%
5.	Reduction of operational expenses	68%

*We can clearly see from Chart 2 that within the financial challenge, ranked as the most important, the change of the current model, i.e. the transition from quantity to quality is the most concerning issue with a relative participation of 97%.*

**Chart 3. Specific concerns related to the phenomenon of patient security and quality of provided services**

Nr.	Patient security and quality of provided services (n=30)	% of the nr. of respondents n=30
1.	The engagement of physicians in improving the quality of healthcare services and patient satisfaction	95%
2.	The engagement of physicians in reducing the unnecessary clinical procedures and practices	88%
3.	Re-designation of programs and new practices in healthcare	84%
4.	Performance-based salaries	81%
5.	Public reporting of results and data (including transparency, control accuracy and precise diagnosing and reporting of charges and obligations)	80%

*According to Chart 3, the engagement of physicians in the improvement of the quality of healthcare services and patient satisfaction, is the most concerning and oppressive for managers of healthcare institutions and appears with a relative value of 95%.*

**Chart 4. Specific concerns related to the phenomenon of governmental regulations**

Nr.	Governmental regulations (n=30)	% of the nr. of respondents n=30
1.	Implementation of International Classification of Illnesses	92%
2.	Auditing in Healthcare Service Centers	90%
3.	Norms of Healthcare Service Centers	81%
4.	Consent verification costs	65%
5.	State and local regulations	61%

Based on the data from Chart 4, **the Implementation of the International Classification of Illnesses** is the most concerning issue for the surveyed managers, with relative participation of 92%.

#### IV. Conclusions

Directors of healthcare institutions feel great **insecurity related to the dynamic and complex environment in which they work**, as well as **the overall economic situation and the possibility of increasing their incomes**. (2) They are also quite worried about **the divisive impact of the regulation changes and approaches towards their patients**. (4) They are mainly focused on **the implementation of the modern technology and the establishment of new values, development of new partnerships, and reduction of expenses**. (5) The phenomenon of obligatory investments in specific skills necessary for **the implementation of the Value-Based Healthcare Model** is pretty challenging to these managers.

##### **These specific skills include:**

Analytical skills for managing the population’s health;

Implementation of new and advanced technologies in order to provide better medical services, e-visits, data protection and timely information dissemination;

Information requests related to reporting the achieved quality and adequate communication between the abound medical personnel. (6)

According to the surveyed managers of university clinics, the compilation and **implementation of strategies for increasing financial funds is also a great challenge**.

Interviewed managers have realized **that in order to achieve high performance**, institutions, which they lead, should:

Provide efficient medical care;

Be financially sustainable in order to invest in the quality of the healthcare services and the management;

Manage well the decreasing salaries due to the change of model from the inpatient to the outpatient one;

Implement advanced technologies such as different analytical methods and modern techniques for data exchange and for managing and treating special populations.

**The issue of developing investment and innovation strategies** as well as new market models at times of financial constraints, **also seem very challenging to the managers of healthcare institutions**.

They claim **that there are three priorities for achieving high performance in the future**. They are as follows:

**1. Constant and stable reduction of expenses;**

**2. Determination of adequate methods of approaching consolidation and changes in provided services** – in order to become cost-effective yet maintain qualitative medical care;

**3. Decisions to provide right services in the right place** – the aim is to minimize the phenomenon of providing double services in different places and concentrate them in places where the cost of their provisioning is lower.

The managing staff of healthcare institutions are aware that **they need to generate new income resources, expand their range of provided services and support and develop their mission**. (7)

The managing staff of healthcare institutions constantly **invest in developing new strategies for motivating their employers and making them aware of acting positively and optimistically in this variable dynamic and complex environment**. (8)

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