

Certificate of high education in health and social care

Module BMSW 4004

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PROBLEM SOLVING AND DECISION MAKING

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INTRODUCTION

Every healthcare organization is marred with different problems that affect their functionality and ability to provide the optimum healthcare services for the patients and community. These problems could be the lack of staff members, finances and personal protective equipment for the staff members. These problems are detrimental to the success of the healthcare organizations and it is imperative that the problems be mitigated in order to reduce their impacts and spread in the organization. Shortage of medical staff is a crippling problem that have affected all the medical institutions across the globe which was made worst by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic which has led to most nurses and doctors considering career change or retiring from the profession in order not to be directly involved with the patients (Romero & Bhatt, 2021). The pandemic has really overstretched the medical services because the staff members were directly affected because they were in contact with the affected patients in which they are required to care for the patients even without the essential PPEs which was another problem. According to (Pal & Poyen, 2017), they defined problem as the deviation from what is expected to happen and what is actually happening. This means that in the healthcare system, problems are events that cause disruption of the services which affects the productivity and service delivery.

This work would explore the best problem solving techniques that would be implemented in the healthcare institution in order to device solution to existing problems. The impact of the problem on the stakeholders such as the service users, professionals and regulators would also be explored in order to evaluate the effect of the problem and the views of the users. Using problem solving techniques, the best solution would be explored and the appropriate method would be implemented and communicated to the stakeholders with monitoring and review techniques that would ensure the successful implementation of the solutions.

PROBLEM DEFINITION

The problem in my workplace is the lack of Personal Protective Equipment for the staff members who are meant to be in constant contact with patients that are infected by the Coronavirus. This is a global problem that most healthcare institutions are facing because due to the sudden impact of the pandemic, other organizations required the essential PPEs which were usually produced for medical health institutions for their own non-medical employees. According to (Cohen & Rodgers, 2020), the shortage of PPEs in the healthcare institutions were as a result of the lack of preparation by the governments of countries despite the impact of the previous diseases such as HIV and Ebola virus. This means that the lack of PPE was due to the inactivity of the government and healthcare institutions despite the huge warning signs from the past pandemic and disease outbreak that exposed the lack of protection for the medical staff. The lack of PPEs in the hospital have led to most of my colleagues to stop coming and are forced to quit because they do not want to risk their health and their families by getting in contact with patients that are infected by the virus. This problem has caused major distrust towards the NHS and government by the medical professionals because they have been left exposed to a virus that could cause fatal damage to them or their loved ones. The severity of the problem was pointed out by (Oliver, 2021) who stated that most of the healthcare workers were put in an appalling situation of staff having to care for people with covid-19 or suspected covid-19 without sufficient PPE to protect themselves from the infection and they have suffered from PPE shortages as stocks ran perilously low with some forced to reuse single use items. This is a major challenge that has affected every healthcare organization because there is a clear case of unpreparedness by the management of hospitals despite the warning signs from the WHO and CDC about potential pandemic after the outbreak of Ebola.

DISCUSSION

The impact of the lack of PPE for the employees on the stakeholders of the healthcare center would be discussed individually below

Service users

The service users are the most important stakeholder of the healthcare institution because the main aim of the institution is to provide adequate medical care that would improve the health of the user. The lack of PPE which caused a shortage of the availability of medical professionals in the healthcare centers which directly affected the care provided for the patients and this also put the patients at risk because the PPEs will not be used by the professionals alone in the hospitals but the patients require them especially the face masks and gloves. Lack of PPE in the healthcare center increases the risk of spreading the virus from infected patients to uninfected patients in the hospital and this could be very fatal to patients with pre-existing illness which could be worsen by the virus. According to (Ghafoor et al., 2021), the lack of PPE has led to a shortage of nurses across healthcare centers and this has put negative effect on the patient care because the exhausted nurses will not be able to provide the best patients' care. The writers continued by pointing out that the lack of PPE demotivates the nurses and medical experts and this could be detrimental to the care of the patients in which the medical professionals could make mistakes and fatal errors. This was supported by (Haddad et al., 2020), who stated that nursing shortages in the hospitals could lead to higher mortality and failure to rescue rate especially in hospitals with high patient-to-nurse ratios. The Covid-19 pandemic effect on the hospitals is that it increased the number of patients in the hospitals while the number of the available nurses remained the same or reduced due to the lack of effective PPEs and fear of the virus. Therefore the increased number of patients in the hospital was a strain on the available nurses because they were overworked and overstretched. The care of the service users is affected and this could result in a high mortality rate of the users because they would not be properly taken care of due to the shortage of medical professionals.

Professionals

The lack of PPE has forced most professionals in the healthcare field to quit their jobs and seek different professions because they have been left exposed to the dreadful virus in their individual workplace without the appropriate protections by the management and government. According to (Campbell, 2020), most of the NHS workers are burnt out, sick and unsupported by the government and the hospital management due to their poor pay, poor conditions and inadequate PPE especially during the pandemic in which they were required to work and care for covid-19 patients. The professionals in the field continue to quit their jobs which a

combination of the way the pandemic has been handled and years of chronic underinvestment on PPEs have left them exposed and vulnerable to the virus (Gilchrist, 2021). The lack of PPE in the healthcare centers is the cause of the migration of staff from NHS trust to private hospitals and other countries as the professionals seek places where their opinions would be respected and mental health would be protected.

Government

The pandemic exposed the incompetence of the government in securing and stockpiling PPEs that should be required by the NHS staff members in order to protect the lives of their frontline workers and mitigate the spread of the virus from patient to staffers. This has forced most of the qualified and capable professionals in the field to consider quitting their jobs or seek appointments in private hospitals because the NHS handling of the virus was very poor. The lack of PPEs was the primary cause of the spread of the virus in hospitals as employees are forced to reuse contaminated gloves and One-time use plastics. Medical professionals continued seeing their colleagues and family members contract the virus due to the unhealthy acts that was been carried out in the hospitals and they feared the worst as it continued. The increasing number of vacancies in the service forced the government to implement a pay rise for the professionals in order to incentivize them to retain their jobs and continue caring for the patients. According to (Campbell, 2020), the increase in pay rise was a long overdue process that the professionals have been demanding but it still a long way from changes that need to be implemented in the service because 65% stated that due to lack of PPE and 45% impact of the crisis on their own mental health was the reason they want to leave the profession or switch countries. This means that the government needs to change its regulations and policies in order to secure the jobs of the professionals because they would migrate and leave the NHS depleted of competent talent and skills that would be essential to combating the increasing number of infected covid-19 patients and other forms of viruses that might arise in future.

ANALYSIS

SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) would be the problem solving technique that would be used to analyze the solution in order to evaluate the different factors that would affect the implementation. According to (Gurel, 2017), SWOT analysis is a powerful framework that is used in decision-making processes because it uncovers the opportunities for success that were previously unarticulated or highlights the threats before they are overly burdensome. This means that SWOT analysis is a strategic planning process that is implemented by organizations or individuals in order to effectively evaluate the different aspects of a proffered solution by highlighting the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

The solution to the problem that was identified would be to proactively acquire enough PPEs that would be able to cover the hospital if there was a global shortage or an unforeseen pandemic in future.

STRENGTHS • Adequate provision for the future • Save expenditures • Proactive • Control of transmission of the virus • Protection to the staff members • Job protection and attraction	WEAKNESSES • Expired PPEs due to long time storage • Different transmission rate of the virus •
OPPORTUNITIES • Lower cost of procurement • Resale value • New technology • Government policies • Guidelines and regulations	THREATS • Change of government policies • Variation of the disease • New transmission process • Change of management in the hospital • Adherence to guidelines •

STRENGTHS

Stockpiling the PPEs for the future would ensure that the healthcare center would have adequate stocks of the essential protective equipment for future purposes in case another pandemic of equal or greater magnitude occurs. This effectiveness of this solution was pointed out by (Demirer et al., 2021) in which they stated physicians face unique challenges in times of pandemics which makes it imperative that a well-structured and widely known pandemic plan is initiated that would establish an effective process in advance. Stockpiling the PPEs would ensure that the hospital is proactive in their endeavors to combat any impending virus and in the process protect the professionals better. Stocked PPEs would give the professionals and nurses confident to carry on their job responsibilities knowing they would not be exposed to the virus and they are well protected therefore there is no fear of transmitting the infection to their families and loved ones. This proactive nature of the hospital would ensure that the employees continue working in the profession and it would attract more competent individuals from the other unprepared hospitals.

WEAKNESSES

Stocked PPEs could lose their effectiveness due to long storage time and short shelf lives. The effectiveness of the equipment could be year long settled dust and humid conditions in the storage spaces. Stockpiling is relative to the current knowledge of potential viruses and diseases; therefore the stocked PPE could be vulnerable or useless against diseases that could arise in the future. During the early days of the current pandemic, PPEs such as face masks and gloves were suggested for individuals that have contacted covid-19 but subsequently the use of those protective materials were suggested for everyone in order to inhibit the spread of the virus. Clearly, this shows that the knowledge of the pending virus that could put the world in another lockdown is limited and the essential PPEs that would be effective against virus could be unknown or not produced.

OPPORTUNITIES

The solution of stockpiling the PPEs would be beneficial to the hospital because they would be able to save money and time that would have been spent in acquiring new and inflated protective equipment during another pandemic. Well implemented strategic stockpiling would enable the organization to have enough equipment in which they would be able to resell to other

organization; therefore making profits in the process and this profit could be used in reacquiring the equipment and reallocating resources to essential areas. New technologies could enable the healthcare center to utilize the stocked equipment in an effective and efficient ways that would be more advantageous to the users and the professionals. Government policies and guidelines could be favorable to the healthcare for stockpiling and bonuses could be awarded to the center for the proactive actions in combating the virus.

THREATS

The solution could be affected by the change in government policies and regulations that guide stocking of medical equipment. Equipment such as the Respiratory Protective Equipment are regulated by law and they are aimed principally at employers who are responsible for their workers who wear the equipment. These rules also guide the health and safety specialists, manufacturers and suppliers of the RPE because they are required to produce the equipment within the set guidelines that would protect the users. The transmission process of the virus could be a threat to the virus because viruses adapt to different ways that would enable their spread to be faster. Stocked PPEs could be susceptible to future transmission rate of virus due to the adaptive and aggressive nature of viruses.

Also the new management in the hospital might have different policies that could affect the stocking of PPEs and this could lead to the end of the scheme. The management should endeavor to have a sustainable plan that would ensure the continuation of the stocking program in order to ensure the continuation of the program that would make the hospital proactive in combating any future pandemic.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Alternative solution would be investing in reusable PPE because the one-time use plastic materials are very expensive such as gloves. Using reusable PPEs would ensure that the organization effectively provide sustainable equipment that would be used for a longer duration and they would also reduce the amount of energy that would be consumed, greenhouse gas emitted and waste generation. This was best explained by (Jaramillo, 2020) who argued that it is imperative that the medical community seek alternative solutions to disposable equipment due to the resulting PPE crisis and the main concerns should be focused on the cost of purchasing the reusable PPEs and effectiveness of sterilization procedures. Investing in reusable PPEs would ensure that the organization utilizes smaller storage facilities and the

huge amount of capital would be saved from purchasing disposable equipment. The writer continued by stating that there is progress in government approval for decontamination systems that would be used for single-use PPE, therefore it is imperative that organizations should seek ways of developing and implementing reusable PPE and decontamination technology.

CONCLUSION

The work has been able to use the problem solving techniques to devise a solution to the problem found in the workplace. The problem identified in the workplace was the lack of PPE and the work showed how it affects the employees, users and other stakeholders. Lack of PPE in the workplace affected the performance level of the employees who are in constant contact with the patients and users of the healthcare centers that are infected or exposed to the virus. Using the SWOT analysis, the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the solution was evaluated and the impact on the solution was stated. The SWOT analysis showed that stockpiling the PPEs would make the organization proactive in the ways they are handling any prospective virus that might arise in future. Also it showed that there are threats that could affect the solution such as change in management and government policies in which continuation of stocking the PPEs could be annulled and policies government the handling and storage of the PPEs changed.

The work has been able to show the decision making process in order to devise effective solution to a problem that exist in my current workplace and this has been done successfully.

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