

## Real-time challenges faced by hospital administrators

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### Abstract:

**Background:** Indian healthcare system has been on progressive road since past few decades and helped the growing economy of the country. It is one of the largest sector for employment, revenue and infrastructure. Growth in healthcare sector has been at brisk pace due to extensive coverage for the population, increased expenditure by public and private players <sup>(1)</sup> With such rapid development and growth, challenges are bound in all sections of healthcare which are managed by hospital administrators. This study shall help us to assess the real-time challenges faced by healthcare administrators in managing and operating hospitals setups.

**Materials and Methods:** A questionnaire-based survey was carried out among 50 hospital administrators from various healthcare setups . A structured questionnaire was used and data were captured in MS Excel and analysed in SPSS-20. The questionnaire's statistical validation was done using Cronbach's Alpha in the SPSS 20 software, and a value of 0.823 which indicates a good reliability.

**Results:** Majority of the subjects had more than fifteen years of experience in the field of hospital administration and 66% of the respondents had MD hospital administration degree whereas the rest had other management degree. 58% of respondents strongly agree that legal and ethical issues is one of major challenge for administrators for any organisation. With respect to recruitment and training of personnel's 54% of the respondents positively opined it as a challenge. 48% equally agreed that branding and marketing of the hospital as well increased awareness of health among population can be challenge. Also delivering quality care at right time, at right place with good resources was considered as major challenge for administrators. Chi square test showed significant association between statutory & regulatory bodies challenge with respect to licensing, renewals, periodic audits with years of experience of hospital administrators (Chi square -18.35, p value-0.031) No other significant association was noted.

**Conclusion:** From this study, it is evident that all hospital administrators working under different healthcare setups face significant challenges in daily operations. As a result, it can directly affect the quality of patient care and hospital economy. It has to be addressed with specific solutions like smarter financial norms, cost-effective approaches and promote tech enabled programmes for the betterment of establishing quality health care to the patient community.

**Key Word:** Healthcare administrators, regulatory policies, human resource, legal and ethics, questionnaire based

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### I. Introduction

Healthcare system is a huge array of decentralised sectors. The *Quality Chasm* report states that health system works on interdisciplinary effort with coordination and collaboration from all sections of the hospitals. Poorly designed systems, processes and lack of integration can fail to deliver quality patient care. <sup>(2)</sup>

Healthcare sector has undergone considerable change over last few years. These changes are driven by the technology, newer advances, consumerism, evidence based medicine, information system, quality standards, research and development and many more.

In any healthcare setup, hospital administrators play a significant role in providing quality and life-saving care for the patient even though they are not directly involved in treating protocols. Their prime goal is to support and provide an excellent medical facility with full coordination from all departments to achieve quality care. There has been a rise in healthcare utilisation over the past decade. Administrators and physicians must collaborate to balance the cost and utilisation to achieve good patient outcomes. Administrators can help in the

reallocation of funds, providing advanced facility, good bed management and transparent healthcare delivery system.<sup>(3)</sup>

Globally, administrators are expected to encounter a surplus of challenges including policy-making, legal and ethical liabilities, technological advancements, training and education, financial funding and quality of care. Healthcare leaders are under immense pressure to find solutions, establish cost-effective programs, maintain well-organised operations, train staff and support other service organisations. Healthcare establishments need skilled leaders and healthcare administrators for organisational sustainment and efficient operations & services<sup>(4)</sup>

In India, as a result of social and demographic changes, customers' expectations, fast technological advancements and competitive pressure; hospital administrators face challenges in efficient management and day-to-day functioning of healthcare setups. Population overload, increased awareness about health conditions, rising healthcare costs, recruitment of competent and trained professionals, strict statutory and legal norms, quality healthcare and advanced information management system are the major challenges faced in the present scenario<sup>(4)</sup> With this framework and understanding, a questionnaire-based study was conducted to assess the real-time challenges faced by healthcare administrators across various healthcare setups.

## **II. Material And Methods**

Questionnaire-based survey research was carried out to assess hospital administrators' real-time challenges from various healthcare setups such as the government sector, private sector, medical colleges and trust hospitals across India using a self-structured questionnaire.

**Study Design:** Questionnaire-based survey

**Study Duration:** 3 months

**Sample size:** 50

**Sample size calculation:** A power analysis was established by G\*power, version 3.0.1 (Franz Faul Universitat, Kiel, Germany) to calculate the sample size for the study. A sample size of 50 would yield a power of eighty per cent to detect considerable differences, with an effect size of 0.5 and at 0.05 significance level.

**Subjects & selection method:** The major subject for this study are the hospital administrators and managers managing various types of setups across the country. Random sampling was used as selection method.

### **Procedure methodology**

The authors designed a structured questionnaire and a pilot study was conducted to assess the feasibility of the study and validate the questionnaire. The designed study questionnaire was sent to 14 administrators from various institutes using google form. The questionnaire was tested in a pilot study to know if it was appropriate and comprehensible. The questions were known to be well defined, understood clearly and consistently presented. One on one discussion was also done with two administrators to assess the validity of the questions. It was noted that all questions were relevant in the modern-day administrative practice and they face all these problems quite frequently.

The questionnaire's statistical validation was done using Cronbach's Alpha in the SPSS 20 software, and a value of 0.823 was observed for the 15 items questions. This indicates good reliability of the questionnaire and its items.

Further, the same questionnaire was given through google forms to 50 healthcare administrators for three months. All the participants were asked to fill a structured questionnaire after obtaining informed consent. No specific time limit was allotted to fill the questionnaire. This questionnaire contained two parts. The first part was on questions related to demographic details, and the second part contains 15 questions in a 5-point Likert scale related to real-time challenges faced by healthcare administrators. The variables of the questionnaire are mentioned in the results (Table 2)

### **Statistical analysis**

All data were captured in MS Excel, and statistical analysis was done using the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) Version 20. The calculation of descriptive statistics of explanatory and outcome variables was done by standard deviation, mean, median, the inter-quartile range for quantitative variables, frequency and proportions for qualitative variables. Inferential statistics like the Chi-square test were applied for categorical variables viz. educational qualification, professional experience, and institution type. At 95%, the level of significance was set.  $p < 0.05$  was noted as significant statistically.

### III. Result

The majority of the study subjects, i.e. 54% in our study, had more than 15 years of experience, followed by 18%, 16%, and 12% having experience of 11-15 years, 6-10 years and less than 5 years of experience respectively. 33/50 (66%) and 17/50 (34%) study subjects have educational qualification of postgraduate degree in hospital administration and other management degree respectively. The majority of study subjects, i.e. 42%, were from corporate hospitals followed by 26%, and 16% each belonged to medical college and government hospitals and trust hospitals respectively (Table 1)

**Table no 1:** Distribution of subjects based on demographic data

VARIABLES	Frequency (n=50)	Percentage
<b>Years of Experience (years)</b>		
<5	06	12.00
6-10	08	16.00
11-15	09	18.00
>15	27	54.00
<b>Educational Qualification</b>		
Postgraduate degree Hospital Administration	33	66.00
Other Management degree	17	34.00
<b>Type of Institute</b>		
Medical College	13	26.00
Government Hospital	08	16.00
Corporate Hospital	21	42.00
Trust Hospital	08	16.00

58% of respondents strongly agree that legal and ethical issues i.e medical negligence, poor quality care, medico-legal cases, breach of trust and confidentiality of patient data, financial frauds is one of the major challenge for administrators for any organisation and with regard to recruitment and training of personnel's also had nearly 54% positive opinion. Financial planning, budget management and accommodating the funds was one the key issue for healthcare managers (50%) which was highlighted specially by the administrators associated with corporate hospital. 48% equally agreed that branding and marketing of the hospital as well increased awareness among population with respect to health can be challenge mostly in corporate hospital and medical colleges. Also, administrators and managers in medical college and corporate sectors agree that delivering quality care at right time, at right place with good resources was considered as major challenge for administrators (48%). 46% of the respondents agreed that government and private insurance empanelment's are beneficial but a challenging process for claims and financial settlements. 42% of respondents felt patient safety and quality implementation in hospital is a tough task because this requires good manpower and most importantly a cultural change among the employees for newer adaptations. Similarly 44% of them strongly agree that shortage of personnel's, rising attrition rate, soft skill deficit and maintaining statutory rules and regulations could be a tough task for managers mostly in medical college. Few challenges such as technology implementation, mergers and contracts, creating bench mark, addition of new services within existing facility received mixed responses from the respondents. Chi square showed significant association between statutory & regulatory bodies challenge with respect to licensing, renewals, periodic audits with years of experience of hospital administrators (Chi square -18.35, p value-0.031) No other significant association was noted. (Table 2)

**Table no 2 :** Distribution of responses based on the variables

QUESTIONS/CHALLENGES	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Q-1 Financial and funding issues	32%	50%	12%	4%	2%
Q-2 Statutory and regulatory bodies for licensing, renewals, audits and reviews	32%	44%	10%	14%	0%
Q-3 Patient safety and quality implementation	42%	42%	8%	8%	0%
Q-4 Recruitment and training of personnel's	24%	54%	8%	4%	10
Q-5 Shortage of personnel's, rising attrition rate, soft skill deficit	44%	42%	4%	0%	10%
Q-6 Delivery of quality care at the right time, right place with right resources for the patients to achieve patient satisfaction	34%	48%	10%	6%	2%
Q-7 Implementing technology – AI, IOT, Telehealth etc.	12%	34%	12%	40%	2%
Q-8 Interference of decisions by trust members and owners	22%	34%	20%	18%	6%
Q-9 Creating benchmark and targets to compete with market	12%	32%	18%	26%	12%
Q-10 Empanelled with government and private insurances	38%	46%	12%	0%	4%
Q-11 Major legal and ethical issues- negligence, poor quality care, MLC, trust breach and confidentiality, financial frauds	58%	30%	2%	4%	6%
Q-12 Increased patient load, rise in internet, ability of patients to guide their health and increased awareness	24%	48%	16%	8%	4%
Q-13 Branding and marketing	16%	48%	26%	10%	0%
Q-14 Mergers, contracts, outsourcing of services are causing a burden to administrators	18%	28%	18%	32%	4%
Q-15 Facilitating the new service within existing resources	30%	40%	6%	20%	4%

#### **IV. Discussion**

The Indian health care system is being reformed by technological ubiquity, rising patient awareness and increasing demand for healthcare. Rising lifestyle-related diseases prevalence and population ageing are the major issues that lead to growing requirements for specialised health care in India. The future of organisational sustainment in health care needs skilled leaders and administrators to plan for substantial challenges. Over the next decade, healthcare frontrunners, managers, leaders have to face real-time challenges. Leaders need to understand that tackling these problems might rapidly consume time as well as funds for medical research, equipment overhaul, operational training and to keep facility running. In order to program health systems leaders need to educate themselves, their staff as well as the vulnerable public on programs and processes. This questionnaire-based survey assessed healthcare administrators' real-time challenges in operations and functioning of hospitals across India.

In our study, most hospital administrators with more than fifteen years of experience in healthcare setup felt that major challenges that significantly impacts healthcare establishment is financial management and funding. These findings depict that severe financial problems faced by hospitals in India, which could negatively affect their whole activities as well as lead to a weakening in implementing their missions. As healthcare managers it's extremely essential to provide affordable service rates in spite of rising costs. Study states that hospitals having financial stability have better patient experience and can maintain reliable systems for quality improvement, whereas financially distressed setups face struggle<sup>(5)</sup> Thus, an apt and definite budget division is recommended in improving resource allocation to enhance staff's and patients satisfaction.

Majority of respondents strongly agreed that legal and ethical issues i.e. medical negligence, poor quality of care, medico legal cases, breach of trust and confidentiality of patient data and financial frauds is one of the major challenge faced by most sectors of healthcare and also agreed by all types of administrators. Study conducted in Saudi Arabia states that patients' rights, confidentiality of patient's information and medical negligence were the top three legal and ethical issues highlighted by healthcare professionals.<sup>(6)</sup> Healthcare managers should explore the legal aspects for healthcare sector and gain skills and knowledge to effectively perform their duty and also propose educating younger healthcare professionals in order to overcome such challenges in upcoming future<sup>(7)</sup>

With respect to human resource policy and protocols, 54% respondents agreed that recruitment and training of personnel is task by itself considering its humongous girth. On the contrary few strongly feel that shortage, high attrition rate, unskilled staff can also be task for managers. These findings were in accordance with the various other studies reported in the literature, the hospital workforce is large and diverse involving thousands of employees in various domains and different skill sets. The study identified similar challenges which managers face in order to manage the manpower. Inadequate assessment and training, insufficient reward system, establishing relationships with employees, employee burnout were few noted. Managers should identify strategic goals and objectives to manage the manpower for efficient outcome of hospital.<sup>(8)</sup>

An article stated that training the workforce in hospitals and migration of the workers was a pertaining issue in healthcare. Also states that efficient management of the workforce can help to build healthy healthcare models which requires developing new policies and strategies.<sup>(14)</sup> Healthcare sectors should be creative and smart in order to retain their employees, avoid staff dropout and reduce attrition by adequate communication, appreciation, performance appraisal, job enrichment programmes, training and development and culture building etc. Healthcare is ultimately delivered for the people by the people which requires strong human resource management at a good cost to improve the overall efficiency.<sup>(14)</sup>

Regulatory hurdles push up the cost of service and care provided in the hospital. Leaders of healthcare are burdened with a variety of newly revised standards comprising the HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act), CMS (Centres for Medicare and Medicaid Services), NABH Providers (National Accreditation Board for Hospitals & Healthcare) and JCAHO (Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations) etc. The provider of healthcare should participate in regular awareness & information processing systems actively. In the present study, administrators also felt that dealing with the statutory and regulatory bodies for licensing, renewals, periodic audits, and reviews are also one of the significant challenges. Studies indicate that leaders must immediately implement enforcement training, document control programmes, routine audits and resolve non-compliance events using integrated healthcare platforms.

An descriptive study was done in order to understand the awareness the patients had regarding the health care quality, errors in medication etc. the study stated that ,most of them had adequate knowledge regarding quality assuming it directly implies to good patient care where's as some had little understanding about medication errors. This indicates that our population are aware about important entities required in hospitals for a positive outcomes in terms of care and treatments.<sup>(15)</sup> Similarly another great source of awareness has been internet and social media, one of the study conducted in Saudi Arabia noted that nearly 90% of the information about health was sought on internet directly implies that there has been an increased awareness which can be both positive and negative. This implies that internet has created a great impact on general

population, which can be challenging for the hospitals and its physicians<sup>(16)</sup> In our study the respondents agree that rise in internet platform ,ability of patients to guide their health and increased awareness through online sources can be challenge specially to the physicians and also to the administrators.

Branding and marketing seemed a challenge for corporate hospitals, whereas mergers, contracts had mixed responses for all sector. Study states that brand identity helps to create strong image and promote hospital services. Branding helps to establish a strong place among competitors, improve one's financial status and ranking of the hospital<sup>(9)</sup> To support our findings, one of the study elaborates regarding why marketing and branding is a challenge. Infrastructure of health in India, reaching rural healthcare, compulsory enrolment to insurance and TPA, growing digital platform, physician engagement, content creation, community involvement etc. makes it difficult to promote the brand.<sup>(10)</sup>

Delivering quality care at right time, at right place with good resources was considered as major challenge for administrators (48%).Lack of reliable data, structural measures and inadequate measurement of quality protocols can directly affect the patient safety and patient care.Rapidly changing disease profile in our country requires leaders and managers to implement programs to improve health care with more emphasis to quality and safety.<sup>(11)</sup>

The majority of administrators also agreed that there are challenges in implementing patient safety protocols and quality care to achieve adequate patients' satisfaction. This challenge can be correlated to inadequate resources, which are likely creating a substantial challenge to increase safety as well as the quality of care in Indian patients. For these challenges, the answer lies in recruiting more qualified staff at each level and robust training on patient safety and quality according to accreditation standards such as NABH and JCI. Most importantly a cultural change among the employees for newer adaptations

The review of this study is challenges are bound in healthcare, pertaining to human resource management, structural changes, management issues, technological advancements etc. These challenges are recognised by the management educators, leaders, and administrators in order to establish a global service to all efficiently and effectively. Healthcare managers should develop capability to provide high quality healthcare to all.<sup>(12)</sup>

## V. Conclusion

From the findings of this questionnaire-based survey study, it is evident that all the hospital administrators are working under different healthcare setups facing a more significant percentage of challenges in many areas while performing day-to-day operations. These challenges help healthcare decision-makers to persuade and deliver health care services better to accommodate quality care, achieve patient's satisfaction, and plan smarter financial norms for the upliftment of their healthcare setup. The legal and ethical risks can be managed by implementing systematic medical system, education and awareness for professionals, adapt preventive strategies and implement them to manage medical and legal aspects.<sup>(13)</sup> Personnel management policy, staff development and training, implementing economic models and cost-effective approaches are necessary for medical college, and teaching hospitals can help to overcome the challenge. Conducting advanced CME programs, promoting IT-based e-health, and encouraging tele-radiology and consultancy can help overcome the tech-enabled challenge. Manpower challenges can be managed by regular training and development, remunerations, promotion and rewards. It has to be addressed with specific solutions in each area to establish quality health care to the patient community.

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