

Change Management in a Health Care Facility

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Keywords: Change management, Health care organizations, Organizational change, Resistance to change, Quality improvement

DOI: 10.55489/njmr.160120261202

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Date of Submission: 28/08/2025; **Date of Acceptance:** 31/10/2025; **Date of Publication:** 01/01/2026

How to cite this article:

Sarla GS. Change Management in a Health Care Facility. Natl J Med Res 2026;16(01):43-44. DOI: 10.55489/njmr.160120261202

Dear Editor,

Health care facility is a dynamic organization and medical science is a forward looking and reforming science. Ongoing research, latest equipment, newer methods, brand new imaging techniques and lab investigations are always made available and the medical and paramedical staff needs to be updated and well versed with all the recent advances. Then there is a learning curve. When Laparoscopic surgery was introduced and Surgeons started doing Laparoscopic Cholecystectomy, they would take about 1-2 hours to complete the procedure but over time, most Surgeons now take an average of about 30-45 minutes for the same. Change refers to any alteration that occurs in the overall work environment of an organization.

There is a lot of resistance to deviate away from tried and tested methods, tests, procedures in the medical field. It needs a lot of convincing and persuasion both for the patient and the treating Physician/ Surgeon to try something new for a particular ailment. It took a lot of time and effort for the patients and the Surgeons to accept that Mesh repair is a better procedure as compared to Bassini's repair. Kurt Lewin, one of the early pioneers of change management modeling, describes his Theory of Planned Change in 3 steps: unfreezing-identifying a need to change status quo; change; and refreezing-reinforcing the new process.[1]

Things change in medical practice; they change for good and they change at a rapid pace. The only permanent thing in life is change. Life belongs to the living, and he who lives must be prepared for a change. It is not the strongest of the species that survive nor the most intelligent, but the most responsive to change. Change is a costly affair requiring a huge amount of resources and involving a lot of resistance from the employees but it becomes very rewarding if carefully and thoughtfully implemented.

The accepted norm for blood tests from a pathological lab was a clean, hygienic setup, aseptic collection techniques and reliable test results. Dr Lal Labs, Thyrocare and Lupin diagnostics changed the standard practice and added a factor of convenience wherein they would arrange for sample collection from your doorstep and deliver results to you on e-mail and mobile number. Change plans help control processes and provide security around uncertainties. Change is better when it comes by invitation instead of imposition.

The process of change management needs thoughtful planning and implementation. Change management means to plan, initiate, realize, control and then finally stabilize the change processes on both corporate and personnel level. Change management plays an important role in any organization since the task of managing change is not an easy one. Managing change is seen as

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Publisher: Medsci Publications [www.medscipublications.com]

ISSN: 2249 4995

Official website: www.njmr.in

a matter of moving from one state to another specifically from the problem state to the solution state and involves individual change management and organizational change management. Individual change management focuses on tools and techniques to enrich employees through the transition helping them to understand where they are in the change process. Organizational change management takes into account change management practices and skills as well as strategies, plans, training programs and emphasizes on communication and the culture of the organization. Change management in health care is the process of implementing new policies, procedures and practices in order to improve the quality of patient care.[2]

There are so many examples to establish that people and companies who changed with time survived and progressed and those who did not, ceased. Maruti Udyog limited kept on innovating and coming up with new models and still has the largest market share of automobile industry in India whilst Hindustan Motors with its iconic Ambassador model is nowhere today probably because they did not change with time. Hyundai Santro and Daewoo Matiz launched in the Indian markets together, but Hyundai is the market leader today and Daewoo is not visible anymore.

Resistance is defined as the informal and covert behavior of an individual in response to a perceived or actual threat to maintain the status quo.[3] Change is resisted because of lack of understanding, fear of unknown, lack of competency, employees feel overloaded and genuine objections. Resistance to change in medical profession is based on fear, uncertainty, doubt, frustration, distrust, confusion, and anger.[4]

Implementing change in the healthcare system is difficult, challenging, and often has short-term results.[5] This becomes more difficult when the context of change includes changes in care organization, modification of common clinical practices, increased collaboration between different disciplines, and changes in patient behavior.[6] This happens because the healthcare services are delivered in an environment where groups of people act in different and unpredictable ways, where tensions arise through opposing, competing, or collaborative forces, and where decisions are influenced by priorities, and records of healthcare professionals are adopted.[6] Accepting change in health care is a challenge because doctors and nurses are not only inflexible but also adept at strengthening the existing.[7] There are 6 approaches to overcome resistance to change viz. Education and communication, Participation and involvement, Facilitation and support, Negotiation and agreement,

Manipulation and co-option, Explicit and implicit coercion.

Adapting to change in the medical science is essential in order to provide safe and qualified care for patients. This review entails the nuances and complexities involved in driving a change as well as the multifaceted nature of resistance to one. Knowing these components of change, healthcare professionals, as individuals, can develop resilience and seek to become active participants of changes that would fit the needs of the healthcare fraternity and aid in evolving patient care. Additionally, healthcare facilities ought to adopt organizational change action where individual, organizational and expected outcome of change should be the milestones of the same.[8] Research on change management, especially, in context of medical field is encouraged and must be developed to evaluate the nature of forces arousing change and deepened understanding of the topic in discussion. This will help curate approaches to slide change smoothly into the mainstream without resistance and facilitate improved healthcare services to the public.

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