



Review Article

Public Relations in Hospital Administration and Planning

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ABSTRACT

The high costs of the services at hospitals, the competition between the public service institutions and private sector, raising the awareness of public on the diseases, demand concentration on public relation services heavily. Public relations encompasses the users and peer groups outlook which is moulded by factors like satisfaction in terms of services provided and attitudes of the hospital personnel. Rapidly changing trends and concepts of advertising/marketing strategies along with new age social media which has an open and a widespread reach, establishing a specialized Public Relations Department has now become mandatory. Not only does it help the hospital organization achieve its socio-economic goals but also helps in patients well being/speedy recovery. To be successful, you need a well-considered public relations plan and, complete with ethical, appropriate and proven strategies.

Key words: Relations, Communication, Consumer, Image, Positive.

INTRODUCTION

A hospital is a place dealing with people ranging from professionals like Doctors, nurses, technicians, paramedics, management personnel to the community at large like patients and relatives. The attitude towards a hospital has undergone a drastic change, due to socio-economic development and upliftment together with community demands, expectations from a service provider. So much so that a patient is treated like a customer whose needs and satisfaction is of prime importance for the service provider.

In public relations, target communities are the groups who are directly or indirectly related to the organization. In terms of hospitals, target community is only regarded as "patients" in practice; nevertheless, doctors, nurses, the other staff, and all the public and private sectors are within the scope of target community. So, public relations

services must be carried by being in the service of all the groups, individuals and institutions correlating with the hospital. The establishment of public relations department and the employment of public relations experts are vital issues. The most significant side of hospitals from the point of public relation is their giving service to all the classes of society and individuals from different ages and sexes. In terms of civil rights, the high costs of the services at hospitals, the competition between the public service institutions and private sector, raising the awareness of public on the diseases, demand concentration on public relation services heavily. ^[1]

The reputation, image and outlook towards a hospital as a service provider depend mainly by the initiatives and attitude of all personnel working in the hospital including Doctors, management staff, etc. A hospital is often judged by the standard of efficiency or courtesy offered

by these departments. Importantly it should be kept in mind that these have cultural and social undertones.

CONCEPT OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

Public relations encompasses the users and peer groups outlook which is moulded by factors like satisfaction in terms of services provided and attitudes of the hospital personnel.

Public relations is to develop resonance between target community and institution, and to plan and sustain the efforts to keep this resonance. [2] Public relations is a management function supplying development and maintenance of relations based on benefit and mutual communication between the institution and target communities which play a fundamental role in the success and failure of an institution. [3] Public Relations is an art and counselling social science branch on organizing services on behalf of both institution and target community by doing trend analysis and estimating the results these trends cause. [4] Public Relations is a process of the profitable integration of new

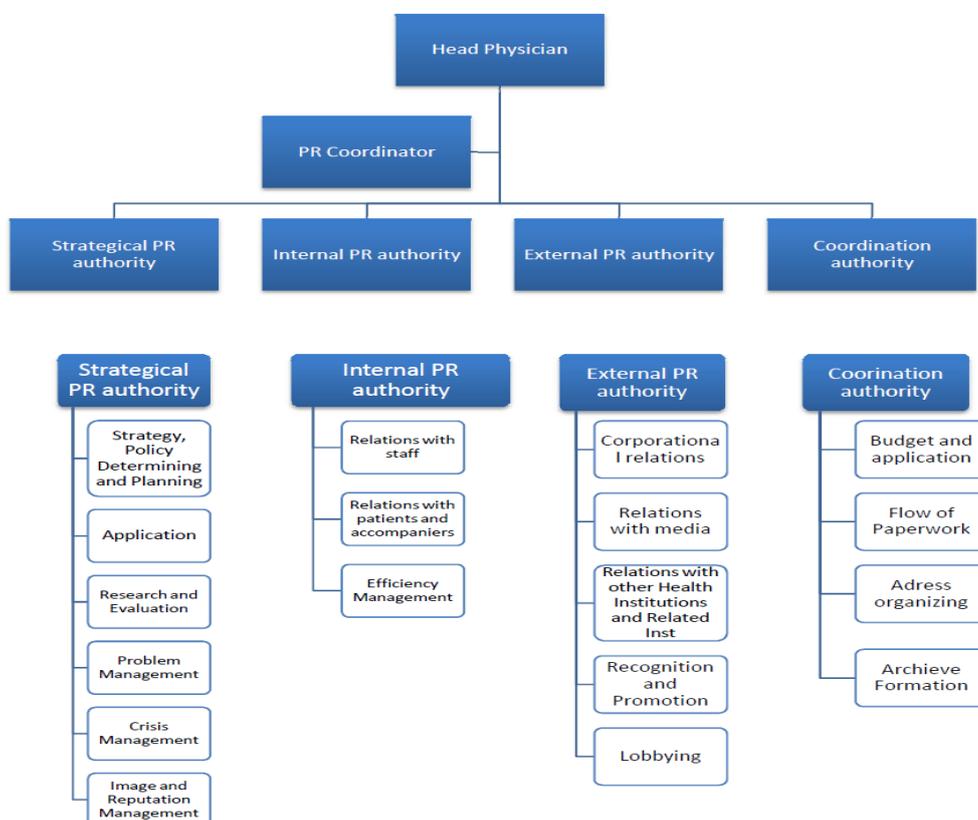
and continuing relations between an institution and partners, and also the management of all the communication activities based on developing and sustaining an institution's brand and reputation. [5] Public relations are a managerial function supplying the achievement of organizational aims, the identification of organization mission and vision, facilitating the organizational change. Public relations department develops the connection between the external environment and the staff of the organization by bringing the expectations of community and the aims of the organization into consonance and developing positive relations. [6]

IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS DEPARTMENT

Public relation is a fresh concept in hospital management. From the recent rapid economic growth and establishment of public relations programs and speciality personnel in many set we can opine that it has earned an important place in the hospital set-up.

ORGANISATION OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN A HOSPITAL [1]

TableNo.1

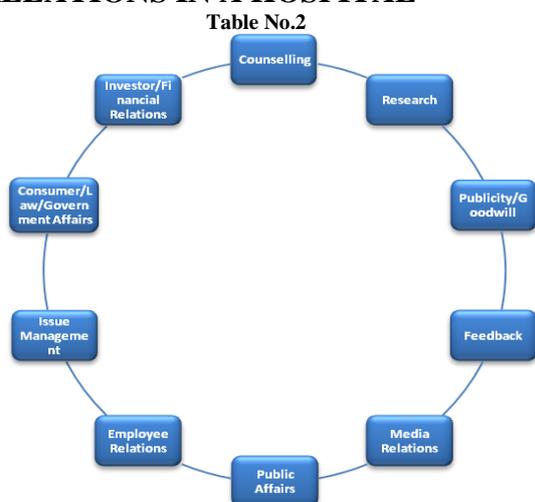


The importance of it correlates with the high inventory cost, investment, expectations of the people, media attention, providing best services at affordable rates, growing criticism, dealing with consumer protection groups, ensuring smooth and comprehensive management organization, at the same time creating a positive and favourable image/brand value.

The Public Relations Department has to specifically ensure positive mouth to mouth publicity, image created in the minds of community regarding quality of services, satisfaction from the services provided, and communication regarding services provided, maintain a dedicated staff, achieving a sustainable economic growth within available resources.

Rapidly changing trends and concepts of advertising/marketing strategies along with new age social media which has an open and a widespread reach, establishing a specialized Public Relations Department has now become mandatory.

COMPONENTS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN A HOSPITAL



RESPONSIBILITIES OF PUBLIC RELATIONS DEPARTMENT IN A HOSPITAL

- Promotions of the health organisations and implementations of the hospital's marketing programmes that are related to Overall Mission and vision of the hospital, also manage and improve the flow of information within the hospital and between the hospital and the community it serve.

- Help management to keep in touch with public, actively solicit both employee and consumer opinion and make management aware of the effects various decisions will have on employee and consumers.
- Writing and distributing news release, feature articles to the press, compiling press list, witting of newsletters, handing and maintain a media information service, arranging press, radio and television interviews for management, preparing marketing plans for various programmes and strategies promotional and marketing effort.
- Public relation department is responsible for community relations, hospital publications, media relations special events and support for fundraising.
- Analysis and problem-solving.
- To develop and maintain good relations with the media and communicate with the press.
- Participate in community affairs that have bearing on the wellbeing of the hospital.

IMPROVEMENT MEASURES

- High quality of patient care will ensure simultaneously good public relations.
- All courtesies must be extended to the patients projecting a good image of the hospital.
- Environmental sanitation, cleanliness and physical comforts provided to patients create good impression.
- Reception, Enquiry and Admission Office should be established as one single unit.
- Allotting priorities in admission on need basis ward reception, privacy to be ensured, and information about illness.

INDICATORS OF MEASURING PUBLIC RELATIONS [7]

- Patient Satisfaction Surveys
- General public opinion
- Number of complaints received
- Turnover of Medical Staff

- Extent of voluntary effort by community
- Consistency in attendance by patients
- Donations
- Letters to editors in local papers
- Media opinion

CONCLUSION

Hospitals require public relations activities to distinguish them from competitors, provide bidirectional communication between the society and the hospital, and assist to create of a strong hospital image and culture. [8]

Study results have shown that public relations activities were a crucial factor in determining consumer hospital choice. The behaviors and attitude of personnel as public relations activities that support the hospital's reputation within the public were the primary variables in hospital choice. [9]

The Public Relations Department is responsible for implementation of hospital marketing programs, advertising, communication, patient satisfaction monitoring. Not only does it help the hospital organization achieve its socio-economic goals but also helps in patients well being/speedy recovery. To be successful, you need a well-considered public relations plan and, complete with ethical, appropriate and proven strategies.

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