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The Association of Hospital Managers Physicians

Founded in 1991, the Association of Hospital Managers Physicians of Lithuania grew significantly during its first decade of existence: its membership extended not only to the managers of healthcare facilities, but also to other people working in the field of healthcare establishments. In 2004 the Association evolved: it updated its charter, structured itself as an association as far as legal entities, and their managers (true members), other senior health staff (associate members), and honorary members are concerned. The growth in the number of members of the association indicates that the activities and efficiency of the association have an operational significance. Over the last five years, the number of members of the association increased from 50 to 114. It involves another 80 associate members in its activities.

The EU Dimension

Our association was accepted as a member of the European Association of Hospital Managers during the EAHM Congress in the city of Tampere (Finland) in 1996. This membership opened up new opportunities for our association: we were offered the opportunity to participate in congresses and other events, to communicate directly with our European colleagues and to familiarise ourselves with the health systems of the old and new EU member states. We learned of their experiences and the effectiveness of already accomplished reforms and issues through a variety of channels, including Hospital magazine.

Our Mission

The association's mission is to unite the members of the association for joint actions, gather them around issues ranging from rearranging and improving the performance of healthcare institutions, to upgrading the quality of healthcare services, improving their organisation, shaping health policy in cooperation with official bodies, and participating in the activities of international institutions and organisations.

Recently, the association has decided to focus mainly on:

Training programmes for our members;

Organising and coordinating the management of staff skills development;

Researching new funding sources for healthcare facilities, and

Disseminating information among the association members about the new innovative health service delivery methods and forms of work organisation.

Training Programme

As managers of Lithuanian health care facilities are generally medical doctors, our association deems it essential to improve their managerial, legal and economic knowledge and skills. We have thus decided to organise the Lithuanian Health System Development, which consists of professional development training courses for all healthcare managers. Pursuing this work, we are currently organising a joint project of all association member institutions, partly funded from the EU structural funds, in order to continue the training and knowledge improvement of our association leaders and their staff - doctors, nurses and other specialists in the managerial and professional fields.

Cooperation with Governmental Bodies and Activities

Economic recession and financial hardship are prevailing right now in Lithuania, as in many other countries. The country's parliamentary elections took place at the end of 2008, with a subsequent change of government. The new government is preparing a stabilisation plan of the country's financial and economic system.

Our association is working hard to propose the changes that will significantly and positively affect the financing of our country's health system management, as well as the principles of transformation and strategic trends for 2008-2012. Our association is also involved in medical community building activities.

After Lithuania's accession to the EU and the establishment of the free movement of citizens, goods and services, a large number of highly trained doctors from our country left to work abroad. For this reason we are now facing a shortage of doctors, particularly in remote parts of the

country. The association has repeatedly proposed solutions to this human resources problem to the government, ministry of health and medical universities.

Recently the association participated, along with the Ministry of Health and State Patient Fund, in the European Union's new initiative on patients' rights and ensuring the freedom of movement and the right to the necessary assistance for the insured in EU member states. It analyses the cooperation and the implementation of the European Parliament and Council Directive on patients' rights to healthcare services in other member states. The country has few private healthcare institutions (with the exception of family clinics, and dental care). Consequently the association often addresses the issue of rational approaches to public-private partnership, and promotes cooperation between public and private sectors.

Quality and E-Health

The constant focus of our association activities is the question of maintaining the quality of health services. Quality and safety can be ensured by a system of institution accreditation. We learned about the accreditation systems most often applied in European hospitals, and a large number of our institutions have already implemented quality management systems and European certificates of management.

Managers of healthcare facilities are also greatly interested in e-health issues. The association is involved in the development of e-health strategies in the country. It aims to create and develop e-health services in institutions, and encourages patients to use them.

In many institutions, an electronic advance patient registration system is being implemented; separate elements of the hospital information system in medical institutions, and a unified national electronic health system are being developed.

Conclusion

In recent years, especially after Lithuania's accession to the EU, big changes have taken place in the country's healthcare system: our legislation was adapted according to European standards. All healthcare institutions are now subject to the same modern diagnostic and treatment technologies; hospitals and clinics are managed and renovated. We are pleased to note that the managers of healthcare institutions, who are members of our association, take the most active part in these processes.

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