
Volume 12, Issue 4 /2010 - Roadmap to Top Quality

The Role of the Top Management Team

In Enhancing Quality of Care Through Integrated Care Pathways (Between a Leading Hospital in Ireland and the Community it Serves)

Conor Hannaway believes that integrated health services are an efficient, effective, patient-centred strategy best suited to the challenges hospitals are facing in Ireland. Integrated healthcare systems can improve hospital systems and also quality of care for patients.

In Ireland, the idea is to develop integrated care services across all stages of the care journey. Hannaway described a care pathway as a complex intervention for the mutual decision making and organisation of care processes for a well-defined group of patients during a welldefined period. The aim of this pathway is to enhance the quality of care across the continuum by improving risk-adjusted patient outcomes, promoting patient safety, increasing patient satisfaction, and optimising the use of resources.

Integrated care should be person- centred and offer a readily accessible and seamless service based on the needs and preference of people who use the service. Both patient experience and quality of care can be enhanced through integrated services. The focus is on values, equity and easy access but also on appropriateness, quality, efficiency, responsiveness and accountability.

Through integrated care pathways, the Irish Health Service has improved health outcomes, ensured the efficient use of resources, improved accountability, streamlined management and moved towards prevention and community care.

Hannaway stressed that implementing integrated care pathways can be a challenging process. There are strategic/ structural questions to be asked: What is a hospital? What is the future of hospitals? There is also a leadership challenge. The hospital management must be ready and equipped with all the competencies required. Lastly, there is the knowing-doing gap. We can read about best practices, new methods but can we actually put them in practice? This is another challenge.

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