

The boundaryless hospital

The new role of hospitals and the triple aim challenge

The concept of the boundaryless hospital, in combination with the value chain approach, provides the theoretical basis for an effective and efficient network design.



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Initial situation

The highly developed healthcare systems of the western countries will, generally, face similar challenges over the next five to ten years. These include:

- The phenomenon of an ageing society which is causing a rising number of multi-morbid patients
- The increase of age-related diseases
- In addition, a rise in the number of chronic diseases, especially those related to an unhealthy lifestyle (work stress, poor nutrition, lack of activity)
- Medical-technological progress will enable more precise diagnoses and innovative intervention techniques, which also makes it possible to treat aged people more effectively
- A growing mentality of entitlement among patients regarding the diagnostic and treatment potential of modern medicine

On the one hand, these trends will undoubtedly contribute to a rising demand for qualified health services. But on the other hand, strict financial limitations narrow the policy option for healthcare provision. Moreover, ethical questions arise and dominate the discussion surrounding the ethics and equity of health services distribution and the limits that medical interventions have to respect. There are many questions. Should we administer any medical service to patients that we basically can?; do the economic factors override the medical aspects?; is rationing an appropriate approach for balancing an excess demand for health services and the limitations of financial resources? These questions will have a central impact on the design of medical service structures in the future. In other words, the increasing demand for state-of-the-art medical services, performed in a healing environment, has to be achieved with limited budgets.

Against this background, it is necessary for a viable structuring of the health care system in future, to find medical supply forms that:

- Conform to patients' expectations
- Ensure the fair distribution of effective evidence-based medicine to the community and

- Integrate innovative treatment into the health-care system in a way that ensures clear benefits and financial viability

These organisational forms of provision, which focus on therapeutic effectiveness and efficient use of resources, require the goal-driven cooperation of different medical specialists.

Therefore, the economic component, as a design parameter for medical service structures, plays a more and more important role. As a consequence, the successful organisation and management of a hospital requires:

- A patient-centred medical service portfolio, which is strictly oriented to the needs of the healthcare market
- Offering selected, highly specialised and innovative medical services ("lighthouse" performance), as well as state-of-the-art care provision for the basic medical needs of the population in a limited catchment area
- Strict orientation of the design of internal processes to patient needs
- Goal-driven and economic cooperation with highly qualified external partners who are capable of contributing to the successful treatment of patients suffering from complex diseases
- A holistic approach to the diagnosis and treatment of patients along the care continuum and
- Assurance of complementary treatments for multi-morbid patients.

The "Triple Aim"

In order to master the future challenges the developed healthcare systems are faced with (increase of elderly people, multi-morbid patients and chronic diseases, cost pressure, technical progress in medicine, entitlement mentality of patients) the provision of medical care has to be organised in networks, which interconnect primary care services with acute care treatment, rehabilitation and elderly care (especially home care based on telemedicine, health apps and digitalised monitoring devices).