

ORIGINAL PAPER

Conflict Management in a Greek Public Hospital: Collaboration or Avoidance?

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Abstract

Background Conflict, as an inherent phenomenon in humans' life, arises as a daily challenge in healthcare organizations.

Objective To investigate major sources of conflict and strategies that healthcare professionals choose when they confront the particular situation.

Methodology Physicians, Nurses and assistant Nurses invited to participate in this cross sectional study. The period during which the study was conducted was June 1st to July 10th 2011. The study was conducted in a Greek General Provincial Public Hospital. One hundred sixty three physicians, registered nurses and assistant nurses participated.

Results Avoidance (62%) found the first choice and negotiation for mutual benefits with opposite side (38.7%) was the second most frequent choice towards conflict. The majority (65.6%) of participants answered that they haven't any training towards conflict management, while 34.4% stated that they have received such theoretical knowledge during their graduate studies. Physicians are more often (74.3%) in conflict with their colleagues than nurses (40.4%) and assistant nurses (51.7%) ($\chi^2 = 11.9$, $p < 0.001$). Workload (83.4%), lack of clear job description (63.2%), unfair resources allocation (59.5%) and low recognition (68.1%) consist some of the major sources that create conflict accordance to our findings. Registered nurses together with assistant nurses, compared to physicians, believed that if they had chosen a different profession than their current one, they would feel "much/very much" happy, peaceful and efficient ($\chi^2 = 17.1$, $p < 0.001$).

Conclusions Nurses are challenged with conflict daily. Healthcare organizations must improve the work environment of health caregivers and create the organizational culture that promotes collaboration between staff. Education programs that help nurses to understand the nature of conflict and provide skills and competencies to resolve conflict constructively, considered essential. Education in conflict management must begin during graduate studies and continue with ongoing training programs in work life.

Keywords: conflict, conflict management, healthcare organization, nurse/physician relationships.