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# **The significance of enhancing health workers' skills and knowledge in driving positive patient experiences**

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**Abstract**--The significance of enhancing health workers' skills and knowledge in driving positive patient experiences cannot be overstated. As patient experience positions continue to evolve, hospitals and healthcare organizations must prioritize the development of skills and qualifications required for these roles. To deliver a positive patient experience in the ED, it is crucial to manage patient expectations and enhance their perception of the care received, given the unique position of EDs in shaping a patient's first impression. Therefore, investing in the skills and knowledge of healthcare workers to drive positive patient experiences is not only beneficial for the patients but also for the clinicians and the healthcare system as a whole.

**Keywords**--health workers', skills and knowledge, patient experience.

## **1. Introduction**

The significance of enhancing health workers' skills and knowledge in driving positive patient experiences cannot be overstated. In today's healthcare landscape, patient experience is increasingly becoming a crucial factor in determining the quality of healthcare delivery. As highlighted by Iyer et al. (Iyer et al., 2018), healthcare organizations are actively seeking to improve patient experience through data-driven, patient-centered initiatives. This involves engaging all staff across the patient's healthcare journey. However, there is a lack

of a standardized approach to developing robust physician or care provider coaching programs aimed at enhancing patient experience. This gap underscores the need for a comprehensive framework to guide healthcare organizations in effectively improving patient experience through the enhancement of health workers' skills and knowledge.

Moreover, Meyer (A Meyer, 2019) emphasizes the evolving nature of the qualifications and skills required for patient experience positions. Healthcare organizations are making significant investments in patient experience and are prioritizing the development of skills and qualifications for these roles. This highlights the dynamic nature of patient experience strategies and the need for continual assessment and development of skills to improve both care and the patient's experience of that care. Therefore, this introduction sets the stage for a comprehensive discussion on the critical role of enhancing health workers' skills and knowledge in driving positive patient experiences.

## **2. The Importance of Health Workers' Skills and Knowledge**

(Quaife et al., 2021) emphasize that the quality of care is dependent on health workers' motivation and knowledge, both of which are influenced by various individual and organizational factors. In the context of a quality improvement program in Ethiopia, it was found that the initiative affected health worker knowledge and motivation, highlighting the significance of continuous skill enhancement and motivation in driving favorable patient experiences.

Moreover, (A Meyer, 2019) underscores the evolving nature of skills and qualifications required for patient experience positions in healthcare organizations. As patient experience strategies adapt to meet unique organizational needs, the importance of continually assessing and developing the skills of health workers becomes evident. This underscores the critical role of ongoing education and internal skill development initiatives in ensuring that health workers are equipped to deliver patient-centered care and drive positive patient experiences.

### **2.1. Impacts on Patient Outcomes**

(Quaife et al., 2021)

(A Meyer, 2019)

## **3. Strategies for Enhancing Health Workers' Skills and Knowledge**

To enhance the skills and knowledge of health workers, various strategies and approaches can be employed. The study by Quaife et al. (Quaife et al., 2021) highlights the impact of a quality improvement (QI) program on health worker motivation and knowledge in Ethiopia. The study assesses how the Ethiopia Health Care Quality Initiative affected health worker knowledge and motivation, emphasizing the importance of these factors in improving the quality of care. The findings underscore the significance of considering individual and organizational factors that influence health worker knowledge and motivation, indicating the need for tailored strategies to enhance their competencies.

Additionally, Daffron, Moore, and Chicovsky (Ratcliff Daffron et al., 2015) emphasize the importance of transfer of learning for health care workers. The study suggests that involving workers in the planning process, utilizing various delivery approaches, and providing immediate application opportunities with organizational support can lead to a higher level of transfer of new knowledge and skills into practice. The findings stress the need for effective teaching methods and peer coaching to address the gaps in transfer of learning, ultimately contributing to improved patient experiences through enhanced health worker competencies.

### **3.1. Continuous Education and Training**

Continuous education and training (CE) play a crucial role in enhancing the skills and knowledge of healthcare professionals, ultimately contributing to positive patient experiences. Mundet-Tudurí et al. emphasize the importance of motivating professionals to apply the knowledge gained from CE in their daily practice to improve population health (Mundet-Tudurí et al., 2017). The study also highlights the challenges faced in identifying training needs and the lack of a policy of professional accreditation within the framework of primary care. To address these challenges, the authors propose strategies such as standardized evaluations of knowledge, skills, and observations of professionals' practice, as well as the use of questionnaires based on medical practice and taxonomies of clinical practice. Additionally, the study recommends incorporating coordination among different levels of the health system, technological reinforcement for improved accessibility to CE, and the use of small groups to reinforce learning to enhance CE efficacy.

Kennedy further underscores the significance of service education for front-line staff in healthcare organizations (M Kennedy, 2017). The article proposes service education content and training methods tailored to incorporate departments' service-related data and teach the science of service quality. By integrating the science of service quality into the development and delivery of a nursing curriculum, the study offers a unique approach to service education for healthcare staff in a value-based paradigm. This approach not only focuses on staff service behaviors but also aims to address the gap between patients' expectations and their actual service experience, aligning with the dimensions of service quality—reliability, responsiveness, empathy, assurance, and tangible evidence. These insights highlight the potential of CE and service education in driving positive patient experiences and improving overall healthcare service quality.

## **4. Case Studies and Examples**

Case studies and examples provide valuable insights into successful initiatives aimed at enhancing health workers' skills and knowledge. For instance, Barden, Giammarinaro, and Petrosino (2020) discuss the implementation of an immersive patient experience leadership education course for senior leaders in a large health system. The program aimed to emotionally connect leaders with the human side of healthcare by placing them in the "other side of the hospital bed," resulting in heightened awareness and transformative leadership. This case exemplifies the

significance of ongoing professional development for leaders in driving quality outcomes and patient experience (Barden et al., 2020).

Similarly, Daffron, Moore, and Chicovsky (2015) emphasize the importance of immediate application of new information for the transfer of learning process among health care workers. Their study highlights the need for a positive workplace environment open to new ideas, as well as the identification and elimination of barriers that hinder the implementation of new knowledge and skills into practice. These examples underscore the critical role of tailored training programs and supportive work environments in driving the effective utilization of enhanced skills and knowledge by health workers (Ratcliff Daffron et al., 2015).

#### **4.1. Successful Implementation of Training Programs**

Implementing training programs designed to enhance the skills and knowledge of health workers is crucial for driving positive patient experiences. A study by Quimby et al. (2021) (Quimby et al., 2021) highlighted successful instances of implementing system-level changes in clinics through training initiatives. The study emphasized the importance of staff engagement, internal communication, and improving workplace conditions, as these factors are linked to improved care delivery and patient experience. Additionally, the research underscored the significance of addressing conscious and unconscious bias in patient interactions and providing inclusive services to enhance patient experiences. However, the study also identified the need for longer-term outcome evaluations and systematic documentation of barriers encountered during the initiatives to further improve training focused on patient experience.

Moreover, Daffron, Moore, and Chicovsky (2015) (Ratcliff Daffron et al., 2015) emphasized the necessity of providing additional support to health care workers to effectively transfer new knowledge into their practice. The study revealed that involving workers in the planning process, using diverse delivery approaches, and facilitating immediate application opportunities with organizational support are critical variables for ensuring a higher level of transfer. Furthermore, the research highlighted the importance of addressing gaps in transfer of learning skills among health care professionals, suggesting the need for changes in teaching methods and the implementation of peer coaching to bridge these gaps. These findings underscore the significance of successful implementation strategies for training programs aimed at enhancing health workers' skills and knowledge to drive positive patient experiences.

#### **5. Challenges and Barriers**

Healthcare systems often face challenges and barriers when attempting to enhance the skills and knowledge of health workers. Resource constraints are a significant obstacle in this endeavor, as highlighted in a study on the implementation of new Healthy Conversation Skills in healthcare settings (Tinati et al., 2012). The research found that while healthcare staff had confidence in using the new skills, practical barriers such as lack of time hindered their implementation. This underscores the importance of understanding the range of barriers and facilitators to skill implementation when developing training

programs for health workers, as it is essential for ongoing support and sustaining skill use.

Furthermore, the formal exploration of what matters to health workers in Rwanda revealed the limited impact of increased community involvement on health outcomes (Serneels & Lievens, 2018). This study emphasizes the complexity of addressing challenges in enhancing health worker competencies, particularly in resource-constrained settings, and highlights the need for comprehensive strategies to overcome these barriers.

### **5.1. Resource Constraints**

(Serneels & Lievens, 2018). Moreover, while training is essential, the focus should also be extended to building non-cognitive, socio-emotional skills to ameliorate attitudes and shift norms, as highlighted by Vasan's pilot study. In addition, the increasing complexity of the healthcare process, coupled with the introduction of new technologies, puts pressure on the health system, particularly in developing economies (Driouchi, 2015). The shortage of skilled health workers and the limitations in training contribute to this pressure. To address these challenges, it is essential to integrate medical training and research into national education systems, as well as to promote international medical cooperation and access to advanced technologies. These efforts can help reduce technology and research gaps and ensure that the health workforce is equipped to meet the increasing demand for quality healthcare.

### **6. The Role of Technology in Skill Enhancement**

Technological advancements, particularly digital learning platforms, play a significant role in enhancing the skills and knowledge of health workers. E-learning platforms offer benefits such as cost savings, accessibility of resources anytime and anywhere, and the potential to provide additional language options for users (Mukamana et al., 2020). However, it is important to address challenges such as limited internet access, lack of computers in rural areas, and the high cost of internet, which hinder the involvement of health workers in e-learning beyond the classroom. To overcome these challenges, technical support, training, and infrastructure improvements are crucial to enhance e-learning experiences and bridge the digital divide.

Moreover, it is essential to focus on understanding digitalization in practice and to adapt social norms and organizational support for information integrity and security to increase collaboration and blend private and professional use of ICT (Vallo Hult et al., 2020). Physicians' use of ICT for learning depends on factors such as social influence, individual digitalization, and the perceived usefulness of ICT. Therefore, incorporating ICT into continuous professional development and clinical work is crucial for developing a better understanding of the usefulness of digitalization in practice. Ultimately, the integration of technology in healthcare professional development can enhance practitioner experience and learning in the digital age.

## **6.1. Digital Learning Platforms**

Digital learning platforms have emerged as a valuable tool for enhancing the skills and knowledge of healthcare workers. The use of mobile health (mHealth) learning tools, such as the Safe Delivery application, has shown promise in improving the knowledge and confidence of frontline health workers in obstetric and neonatal care in India (Sarin et al., 2019). This highlights the effectiveness and applicability of digital training at the primary healthcare level, addressing digital illiteracy among healthcare workers.

Moreover, a study on e-learning platforms for the professional development of healthcare professionals in Rwanda emphasized the benefits of e-learning, such as accessibility of resources and anytime, anywhere learning (Mukamana et al., 2020). However, the study also identified challenges such as high home internet costs, limited internet access in rural areas, and the need for technical support and training to enhance the usability of e-learning platforms. Addressing these challenges, including providing technical support, reducing internet costs, and promoting digital literacy, is crucial for optimizing the effectiveness of digital learning platforms in healthcare education.

## **7. Ethical Considerations**

Healthcare professionals' knowledge and adherence to patient confidentiality are crucial ethical considerations in enhancing their skills and knowledge. Patient confidentiality, as defined by the restriction of access to personal information from unauthorized persons, is a fundamental right that patients are entitled to. It involves keeping privileged communication secret and not disclosing it without authorization (Derese Tegegne et al., 2019). Breaches of confidentiality, whether due to negligence or indiscretion, can jeopardize the physician-patient relationship and threaten patients' safety. In Ethiopia, the healthcare administration law mandates health practitioners to maintain confidentiality, yet reports of unethical behavior regarding patient confidentiality persist. This underscores the importance of addressing ethical implications and ensuring that initiatives aimed at improving health worker competencies also prioritize patient privacy and confidentiality.

Furthermore, ethical awareness and expertise among healthcare professionals, particularly in emergency care settings, are vital for the quality of healthcare delivery and patient experiences. The principles of autonomy, fairness, beneficence, and non-maleficence form the cornerstone of ethical decision-making in clinical settings, and their integration is crucial in emergency healthcare scenarios (M Al-Wathinani et al., 2020). Given the complex moral dilemmas that emergency care providers face, assessing their ethical awareness and knowledge is essential for informing targeted initiatives and educational programs aimed at enhancing patient experiences and the overall quality of healthcare delivery.

### **7.1. Patient Privacy and Confidentiality**

Patient privacy and confidentiality are crucial ethical considerations in the healthcare setting. Confidentiality involves restricting access to personal

information from unauthorized individuals and processes, ensuring that privileged communication remains undisclosed without the patient's authorization (Derese Tegegne et al., 2019). It is a legal obligation for health professionals to handle patients' information privately and securely to protect patients' well-being and maintain trust in the physician-patient relationship. Breaches of confidentiality can lead to a decline in healthcare quality, as patients may become hesitant to seek care and attend follow-up appointments due to mistrust of health providers (Karasneh et al., 2021).

In Ethiopia, the healthcare administration law mandates health practitioners to maintain confidentiality, but limited research has focused on health professionals' awareness of ethical rules and data security. Reports of unethical behavior related to patient confidentiality and the loss of patient medical records due to unauthorized handling are familiar issues in the country, impacting the quality of care provided to patients. Therefore, there is a growing need to address patient data sharing and confidentiality among health practitioners in Ethiopia, filling the evidence gaps on health professional knowledge, attitude, and associated factors related to patient confidentiality.

## **8. Future Trends and Directions**

Innovations in healthcare training are expected to play a pivotal role in shaping the future of enhancing health workers' skills and knowledge. As highlighted by (A Meyer, 2019) , healthcare organizations are making substantial investments and prioritizing patient experience, leading to an increased focus on identifying the qualifications and skills required for patient experience positions. This trend suggests a shift towards continually assessing and evolving the skills needed for healthcare professionals to not only improve patient care but also enhance the overall patient experience. Moreover, the evolving strategies in patient experience are likely to drive the internal development of skills as well as the recruitment of personnel with specific expertise, emphasizing the importance of staying abreast of changing skill requirements in the healthcare sector.

### **8.1. Innovations in Healthcare Training**

Innovations in healthcare training are essential for enhancing the skills and knowledge of health workers, ultimately driving positive patient experiences. According to Fritzsche et al. (Fritzsche et al., 2021), the integration of advanced design thinking methods in the field of health tech innovation is crucial for preparing future healthcare professionals to lead disruptive and exponential innovation. This highlights the need for a structured pathway toward disruption, emphasizing the importance of a novel HealthTec Innovation Design Curriculum with entrepreneurship in mind. Additionally, investing in leader-of-leaders is crucial for organizational success, as noted by Barden et al. (Barden et al., 2020). Their experiential-based program resulted in enhanced organizational awareness, best practice sharing, and a focus on relationship-centered communication skills, empathy, and humanism. These insights underscore the significance of engaging health workers in innovative educational offerings to drive positive patient experiences.

## 9. Conclusion

In conclusion, the significance of enhancing health workers' skills and knowledge in driving positive patient experiences cannot be overstated. As patient experience positions continue to evolve, hospitals and healthcare organizations must prioritize the development of skills and qualifications required for these roles. Organizations will need to assess whether these skills can be developed internally, through education, or by bringing in personnel from outside the organization to ensure the continual improvement of patient-centered care and the patient's experience of that care (A Meyer, 2019).

Furthermore, the patient experience in the Emergency Department (ED) has emerged as a critical differentiator for healthcare facilities, with patient satisfaction directly impacting clinical outcomes and the overall profitability of the healthcare system (Aleksandrovskiy et al., 2020). To deliver a positive patient experience in the ED, it is crucial to manage patient expectations and enhance their perception of the care received, given the unique position of EDs in shaping a patient's first impression. Therefore, investing in the skills and knowledge of healthcare workers to drive positive patient experiences is not only beneficial for the patients but also for the clinicians and the healthcare system as a whole.

### 9.1. Summary of Key Findings

This subsection offers a comprehensive overview of the key findings regarding the significance of enhancing health workers' skills and knowledge in driving positive patient experiences. Meyer emphasizes the evolving qualifications and skills required for patient experience positions, highlighting the need for organizations to assess and develop internal skills while also considering external expertise. The author underscores the significant investments and priority placed on patient experience within healthcare organizations, indicating the continual evolution of skills and qualifications to meet unique patient experience strategies.

Furthermore, Holman underscores the impact of customer service training on patient satisfaction scores, emphasizing the importance of understanding patient expectations and concerns to tailor relevant training materials. The study advocates for training staff in customer service skills to positively influence the patient's experience of care, creating distinct leadership roles to establish a service-oriented environment. These insights underscore the critical role of ongoing skill development and training in enhancing health workers' abilities to drive positive patient experiences.

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