

Sustainable Development in Healthcare Organizations

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Abstract : The health sector is growing and newer therapies are being introduced. Many times environmental pollution is caused by these therapies. This leads to global warming which subsequently affects the health of the people. Hospitals play a major role in exhaustion of natural resources and changes in the environment. A hospital should be a place of healing environment, it should not adversely affect the health of the people and should contribute to and be a source of wellbeing in the society.

INTRODUCTION

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT is defined as a design of means that targets to accommodate human demands and at the same time conserves the climate so that for present and future generations these demands can be met. The main aim here is to find out how extensively hospital environmental sustainability has been covered by healthcare organizations.

Healthcare systems and hospitals are always trying to find new ways to improve their productivity and thus decrease their overall costs. Sustainability can be defined as the refraining of the depletion of natural resources so that there is maintenance of ecological balance.

Any organization be it healthcare or otherwise benefits greatly from Sustainability initiatives. There is a rise in the trend of healthcare organizations going in for sustainable efforts. The top management is trying to find out newer solutions which makes their organization more green.

For hospitals trying out green initiatives, it is also productive for their business as it lowers down costs. All hospitals that continue with green initiatives find many benefits. It greatly markets the hospital as an eco- friends organization thus increasing its name in the community and enhancing its public image.

According to WHO Director General Gro Harlem Brundtland (Brundtland 2002)

“A healthy life is a result of sustainable development .as well as a strong and underrated means of getting it. One has to see health as a valued resource in itself, and as a source of challenging monetary expansion and decreasing scarcity . “

Health and sustainable development are both two sides of the same coin, sustainable development is impossible in the absence of health and sustainable development supports and promotes health.

An important aspect of sustainable development is the quality of life. For the future viability of communities, sustainable development is a must.

To be truly viable, however, the efforts should be economically safe and at the same time help in making the community environment friends. In this decade, there is a great initiative by the community on being green and being more environmentally viable. Since the last two decades or so for sustainable development, organizations have been acquiring recognition. Therefore it is favourable to take a path built on not only on activities at the large scope scale of community but also on the small scope of the persons for the implementation of sustainability strategies. There are opportunities in hospitals for viable growth since they play a key role in healthcare systems (Weisz et al. 2011)

There are three aspects of sustainability namely; the economy, the climate and the community (Saxena and Khandelwal 2010). These days countries and their leaders have an acute interest for sustainability and conservation of the climate due to the issues of global warming and so a new field has come up as green business.

So there are enterprises which market green products and thus such business is called green marketing, it can be in terms of environmental friendly building's, environment friendly consumables etc. Environment friendly is accomplished by the distribution of cut-throat valued equipment's and businesses that bring growth of life and appease human demands, and at the same time, more and more decreasing environmental brunt's at least online with the planets holding scope.

In the public health and health promotion literature there have been endless discussions with regard to sustainable development. Having said that sustainable development is a complex mechanism. For it to happen developed and developing countries would have to change from asset-demanding management systems and way of living to ones that absorb enormously less assets and

thus decrease pollution .

There is a greater need for healthcare organizations leaders to check their organizations present strategy to sustainable development and then find more ways and means to achieve them .This also stands true as healthcare organizations differ from one another also so what approach works for one might not work for another .Many governments are asking the healthcare organizations in their countries as to how the sustainability can be increased in their organizations . But this is very difficult to achieve as health care sector is disorganized and non -systematic so it is quite challenging to bring about sustainable efforts in such an unstable environment .At the same time sustainable development is the need of the hour in hospitals since they are a major source of energy consumption and environmental pollution . Hospitals have a momentous negative brunt on the environment by their high usage of energy and materials .There is a lot that can be done to much that can be done to decrease impact on the environment such as going for consumables and non -consumables which do not consist of damaging chemicals ,being aware about our utilization and decreasing our non- renewable source dependence (Gerwig , 2014) .

Apart from this sustainability also caters to a wide variety of gains which are peculiar to the health sector :

- To become more effective hospitals are increasingly adopting lean approached to become more effective in different processes .
- There is a great emphasis by many leaders to decrease pollution ,and this happens when the society at large becomes a preference for healthcare organizations .
- Many sustainability efforts, can enhance patient health by decreasing infection rate and lessening patient transfers .

Thus health care leaders should acknowledge the continuing environmental expenditure of giving health care and to decrease the material and power consumption of the health care sector . Hospitals and health care systems can gain quite a number of gains by adding various business and taking edge of the wide range of viable freedom be it in terms of building designs or by using eco-friendly materials for the hospitals .

Formulating a Sustainability idea for Hospitals

First and foremost there is a need for hospitals to make a commitment towards sustainability .Different hospitals caters to different requirements but at the same time there should be a vision towards making sustainability their number one goal amongst the other goal of the hospital . When any health care organization makes such a commitment there are bound to be barriers in its path . Some of the common barriers include barriers of time and costs .The commitment of hospitals towards their sustainability efforts should be announced to all so that there can be collaborations and alliances with other sustainable industries if any . This can include the government and the private sector as well .Nowadays there are a lot of government initiatives which are being taken in this regards so the reach of the hospital becomes easy .

At the same time going for such magnanimous steps requires a commitment of the whole hospital right from the top management to the lower staff who are working in the hospital to the patients which come to the hospital and others etc. The healthcare organization can form green teams , green committees etc to bring about a holistic change in their organization within a short period of time . After formation of the above teams , councils etc measurable and realistic goals should be set up by the management for achievement of the targets . This can be quite a challenge with newer diseases coming up and newer methods of interventions which are being designed to curb thesediseases .

Once the targets set up by the management are achieved the victory stories should be shared by all in the organization. This should be shared with the media and external agencies such as the community etc so that the stakeholders in the form of new patients, their relatives , staff who want to join the organization and the community at large are aware about the green culture in the hospital and thus significantly contribute to it in their own small ways .

Lastly the organization should not become stagnant in terms of the technology and designs and processes it uses to create a sustainable culture in the organization. Newer methods should be continually reviewed by the organizations management to face upcoming challenges . There should be an open ended dialogue within the management and with the community at large about the green initiatives undertaken by the hospital .

The sustainability advantages in terms of time , cost and return on investment should be identified and revised from time to time . Also policies should be designed keeping the dynamic nature of the sustainability initiatives in mind , what might work today might not work in 5 years or ten years from now on . A very common example is the use of mercury in thermometers and sphygmomanometers . What was in vogue a decade ago is now seen as a major environmental pollutant .

HOW THIS STUDY WAS CONDUCTED

Methods

The method of secondary data collection was used as the methodology for the study . Various data sources were searched for review articles , paper presentations , research articles , books and essays pertaining to the topic . Only data from the last two decades was used for the study since earlier data is more likely redundant for the study as climate change has seen a greater accelerated increase in the last twenty years and the efforts in terms of having sustainable hospitals has greatly changed in the two decades .

Findings

During the course of the study there was an effort to find out repeated research matter .Hospitals need to beyond the traditional role which has been assigned to them and become centres of sustainability in the community . The healthcare sector is able to renew its commitment to providing health to the community by its efforts in sustainability. Hospitals need to provide optimum patient care and at the same time optimize its resources to work in an environmental friendly way .

Various interventions by the hospitals can include purchase of eco -friendly products , design of eco- friendly building s , scientific and eco- friendly waste management practices , using more energy optimum devices , recycling more and more and so forth . In this there is a greater emphasis in using eco- friendly scientific techniques be it for designing green architecture or for waste management .

This also bring to light the fact that the purchase decisions of the hospital are as important as the disposal mechanism decision (Sattler and Hall 2007) .So hospitals should purchase eco -friendly supplies as well have proper eco- friendly mechanisms to dispose them .

In the construction of green buildings features of day lighting can be used that is using natural light instead of artificial light . The buildings should be designed in such a manner that they echo with the larger vision of having an environmental friendly hospital. This includes landscaping , construction of inviting staircases that people to use them rather than elevators , dustbins everywhere to throw products which can be recycled , rainwater harvesting provision in buildings .

So there is a need for the hospitals to incorporate sustainability as one of its primary goals along with patient care (Jameton and Pierce 2001).

CONCLUSION

Due to global warming and climate change there is an increased focus on making most industries more eco- friendly .In this respect hospitals come up as one of the top industries which needs to become more sustainable . The health sector is constantly growing and is constantly interacting with the environment at large , thus making it a significant field for sustainability initiatives . Though making sustainable organizations is the need of the hour very less is being done when it comes to making hospitals sustainable . Research is being done in the field since it is a known fact that hospitals are a major source of environmental waste coupled with their ability to make the waste hazardous . Great efforts need to be taken by the leadership of the hospitals to bring about a culture of eco friendliness .This effort needs to be taken at both level at the level of the organization and the level of the individual that is the patient who comes to the hospital .

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