

Medical informatics training programme to support the Romanian health care management information system

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Abstract

The Health Management Information System (HMIS) project initiated by the Romanian Ministry of Health as a component of the healthcare reform is aiming to ensure the technical, functional and operative support for: (i) a better overview of the population health status, of the medical care needs and of the Health System performances; (ii) the improvement of the resource allocation and consumption; and (iii) reform support. This system is supposed to assure a better information flow from the lower to the upper levels of the healthcare network by help of a modern IT support. In the first development stage the system is planned to link the Ministry of Health with the 41 District Health Authorities (DHAs) and with more than 200 pilot health units. The implementation of such a large system raises serious problems of acceptability and a thorough training programme for both technical staff and end users must be considered in order to face this challenge. © 1998 Elsevier Science Ireland Ltd. All rights reserved.

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1. Introduction

In the developed countries the computing equipment entered gradually in the daily life of different categories of professionals. In Romania this process has completely different characteristics due to the needs for reconstruction. A massive amount of computers were introduced by means of short term pro-

grammes into various fields of activity. This assault of the electronic machines might and sometimes it even does, induce adverse reactions. The main question the authors had in mind when they started to design the training programme to support HMIS was 'How to make people understand that computers are not intruders in their professional lives?' In designing the training programme the authors took into consideration the objectives of the training programme and the influencing factors.

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2. Objectives and the influencing factors of the training programme

2.1. Main objectives

- To meet the HMIS needs: (i) to establish the topics according to the strategy adopted to prevent convulsions of the IT change; (ii) to establish the audience according to the main categories of personnel involved in the IT change process; and (iii) to establish the teaching methods according to the cultural real conditions with respect to the information-using which exists in the health units.
- To manage training resources: (i) to assess existing training resources; (ii) to estimate the minimal resources for launching the training; and (iii) to assess the quality of training.
- To establish working frame and standards.
- To establish development guide lines for medium and long term.

2.2. Influencing factors

In designing the training program for the users of HMIS the authors have considered that the teaching is determined by a number of factors that have to be controlled and tuned in order to have an efficient knowledge transfer: training resources (time, trainers, teaching equipment, training rooms, communication means, costs); knowledge transfer channels; distorting factors and teaching barriers; teaching feedback; and catalysts to teaching.

3. Strategy adopted to reach the main targets of the training programme

The authors considered the model presented by J. Rohan in 1992 for strategies

regarding developing end user computing for health care in developing countries [1]. Based on this model, on the analysis of the main factors influencing the education process and taking into account the training programme objectives the strategy for the Ministry of Health training network development was established Table 1.

4. Results

4.1. Meeting the HMIS needs

At this stage of development, HMIS is mainly destined to the deciders in health care policy and to the administrators. The main concern of the project co-ordination staff was focused on the evaluation of the HMIS users qualification in order to prepare their abilities to take advantage of the new IT support. The target students, the curricula and the teaching methods were selected according to the results of the evaluation process.

4.1.1. Audience

The questionnaire based needs assessment survey on human resources skills revealed:

- A deficit of 77% of technical staff at the District Health Authorities (DHA) level in the operation and maintenance of the system.
- A deficit of 72% of trained end users.
- A total lack of literacy of the end users at the dispensary level.

The target audience established for these training sessions is represented by physicians, nurses, administrators and IT staff. In each district, the staff participating in the courses comes from DHAs, District Inspectorates of Sanitary Police and Preventive Medicine, District Hospitals, Town Hospitals, Health Centres, Ambulance Central Stations, rural and urban dispensaries.

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