

Health & Research Journal

Vol 5, No 2 (2019)

Volume 5 Issue 2 April - June 2019



Volume 5 issue 2 April-June 2019

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Published in cooperation with the Postgraduate Program "Intensive Care Units", the Hellenic Society of Nursing Research and Education and the Helerga

Teamwork in cardiac rehabilitation

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doi: [10.12681/healthresj.20872](https://doi.org/10.12681/healthresj.20872)

To cite this article:

Kadda, O. (2019). Teamwork in cardiac rehabilitation. *Health & Research Journal*, 5(2), 38–40.
<https://doi.org/10.12681/healthresj.20872>

EDITORIAL ARTICLE

TEAMWORK IN CARDIAC REHABILITATION

Teamwork is globally recognized as a key tool for running an efficient healthcare delivery system. A group is defined as a set of two or more individuals interacting dynamically, interdependent to a common goal and assigned to certain roles or functions to perform at a predetermined time. In literature, "teamwork" has been distinguished by "taskwork"; as "taskwork" represents *what* teams are doing, whereas teamwork describes *how* they are doing it with each other".^{1,2}

In health field, an effective team is a group whose members -including patient- communicate with each other, reporting their observations, their experience and their decisions in order to achieve the best quality of health care.¹

In recent years, healthcare has changed a lot; is focused on patient safety, effective communication between healthcare group-patient, and finally on patient's involvement in the decision-making process. It is of utmost importance to develop successful health care groups with specific characteristics. In particular, team members must have specialized knowledge and skills and work efficiently under conditions of great workload. In addition, they are aware of their role and the roles of other members in the group and interact with each other to achieve a common goal. Finally, they should be able to make supportive decisions for patient's benefit.

The most important role in the healthcare group is the leadership which is called upon to give members a common orientation by cultivating a climate of mutual co-operation, trust and effective communication.³

Communication is essential and reflects the basis for effective teamwork and there are many strategies such as education and training programs aimed at improving it. In clinical practice, a very important strategy is the development of protocols, clinical guidelines and checklists that in conjunction with group meetings can identify problems evaluate and redefine clinical practices for the benefit of the patient.⁴⁻⁶

As for cardiac rehabilitation process, during the last decades, rehabilitation programs are receiving increasing attention by many researchers. The main reason for this upcoming interest is that rehabilitation maintains or improves both physiologic and psychosocial patient outcomes. Cardiac rehabilitation programmes are designed to limit the physiological and psychological effects of cardiac illness, control cardiac symptoms, stabilize or reverse the atherosclerotic process, and reduce the risk of sudden death. The cardiac rehabilitation team includes

cardiologist, community cardiologist, physician, or general practitioner, nurse specialist, physiotherapist, dietitian, exercise specialist and psychologist. Health care professionals are working together aiming at encouraging patient to change health behavior and lifestyle (promote physical activity, healthy diet, smoking cessation) and comply with cardioprotective therapies.⁷⁻⁹

In conclusion, researchers underline that cardiac rehabilitation programs are an important strategy in comprehensive cardiac health care because they have been shown to reduce patient mortality and hospital readmission. At the same time improvement in psychological wellbeing and quality of life is observed. Effective teamwork among healthcare professionals in cardiac rehabilitation process requires specific cognitive, technical, and affective competence and can positively influence the quality of health care provided by creating an environment of clinical care excellence.^{10,11}

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