
CONTINUING TRAINING OF HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS - PROBLEMS AND TRENDS

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Abstract: In modern conditions, many challenges arise for the class of health care professionals. Health care professions are changing and evolving according to economic and political realities, leading to the need for continuous change and professional development. The continuous development of technologies in medicine leads to an increase in the need for continuous training for the medical professions. The formation of professional competence in health care professionals is a long and complex process, which is realized within their training, but continues to improve after their implementation. The aim of the study is to analyze the problems related to the continuing education of health care professionals in hospital care. A survey was conducted of students studying in the Master's program "Health Care Management" at the Faculty of Public Health of the Medical University - Sofia. The study included 80 first- and second-year students. The survey was conducted in the school year 2020/2021. The results show that, according to a significant part of the respondents, the continuing education courses increase their professional competencies. Only half of the respondents indicate that in their participation in various forms of continuing education they have acquired new knowledge and skills, which shows the need to develop curricula aimed at supplementing and rewarding the basic professional knowledge and competencies of health care professionals. When conducting training that does not include new knowledge and skills, it leads to a decrease in the interest of specialists and reduces their motivation for further training. There are no positive answers from the respondents to the question whether they perform activities for which they are not trained. However, according to the respondents, it is necessary to make more efforts and apply modern incentives to motivate health care professionals for more active participation in the forms of continuing education by the management of the medical institution. In order to provide trained and qualified healthcare professionals in healthcare facilities, it is essential to pursue a policy and strategy supporting continuing education by developing and funding staff training programs. Stimulating and motivating specialists to participate in continuing education should become one of the priority directions of hospital management.

Keywords: continuing education, healthcare professionals, competencies

1. INTRODUCTION

In modern conditions, many challenges arise for the class of health care professionals. The professions in the field of "health care" (Hristo Milcheva, 2019) are changing and developing in accordance with economic and political realities, which leads to the need for continuous change and professional development. The development and introduction of technology in medicine leads to an increase in the need for continuous training for the medical professions. The formation of professional competence in health care professionals is a long and complex process, which is realized within their training, but continues to improve after their implementation. Modern educational systems in the field of health care (A. Andonova, 2013) aim to train professionals who will be able to provide quality health care to society, while maintaining their motivation to continue training, as in the forms of lifelong learning, as well as in subsequent educational degrees. Continuous maintenance, upgrading and improvement of knowledge and skills are an important element in the development of healthcare professionals. Through continuing education (E. Ivanov, 2021), the expansion of professional competencies for successful coping with the challenges of medical practice is achieved.

The aim of the study is to analyze the problems associated with the ongoing training of health care professionals in hospital care.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

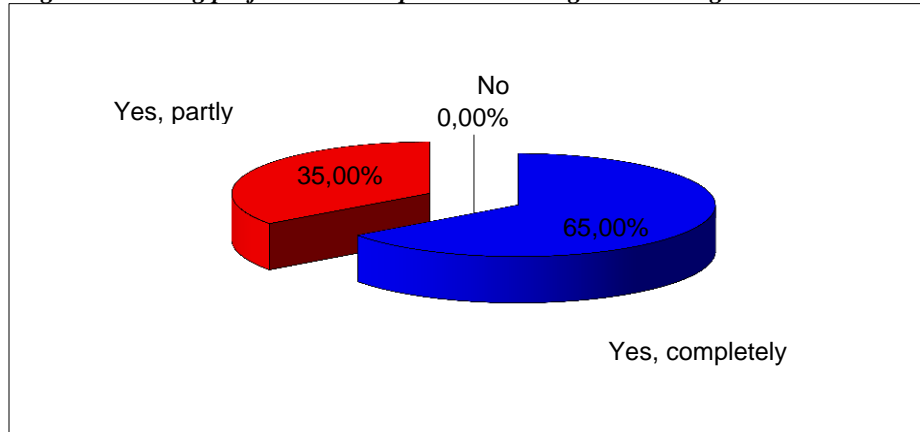
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3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Healthcare professionals actively participate in the forms of continuing education in the country. According to the National Electronic Register of the Bulgarian Association of Healthcare Professionals (E. Ivanov, 2021), for the period 2016-2021 nurses have 101,147 participation in courses for continuing education; midwives -18,973; medical laboratory assistants - 7903; X-ray technicians - 3642. It is also important not only the number of participations, but also how effective is the training of health care professionals.

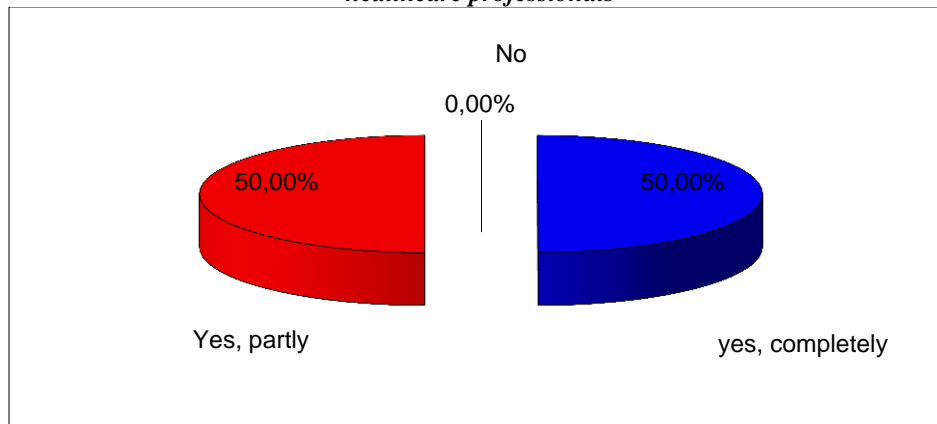
The role of continuing education courses is to increase the professional competencies of healthcare professionals. The opinion of the respondents on this issue is presented in the following figure 1

Fig. 1 Increasing professional competencies through continuing education courses



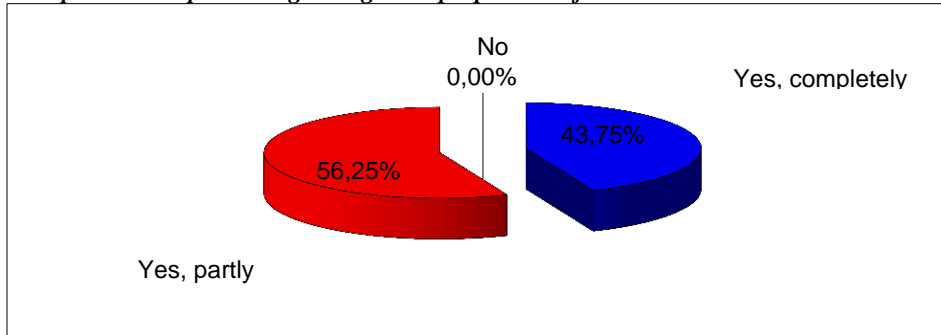
The results show that according to a significant part of the participants in the continuing education courses, an increase in their professional competencies is achieved. The lack of negative answers to this question is a good indicator of the effectiveness of the training. More than 1/3 of the respondents indicate the answer "partly", which means that it is necessary to offer courses specifically aimed at developing the professional competencies of the relevant specialists.

Fig 2 Continuing education courses fully corresponds the necessary new knowledge and skills of healthcare professionals



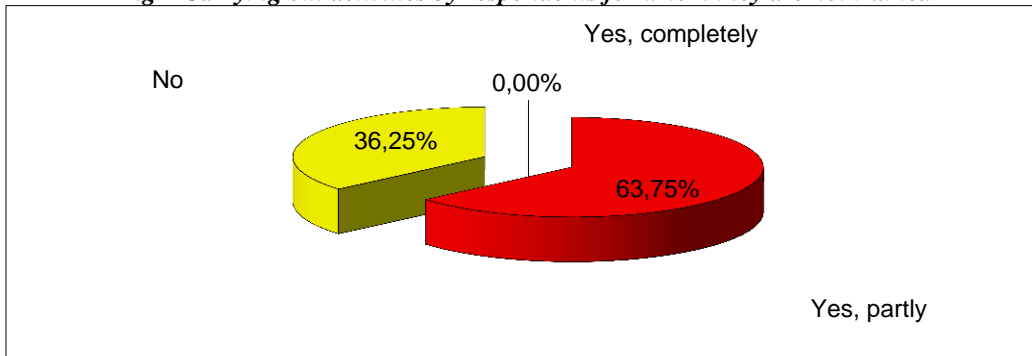
Half of the respondents answered "Yes, completely" and the same number said "Yes, partly". Continuing education courses should focus on the specific needs of professionals for new knowledge and skills to help them achieve better and more successful. There are no negative answers to this question, which shows that continuing education courses play a key role.

Fig. 3 Respondents' opinion regarding their preparation for the new activities at their workplace



More than half of the surveyed healthcare professionals answered this question that they are partly prepared to carry out new activities at work. These data show that it is necessary to use more effectively the forms of postgraduate education to provide knowledge and skills to professionals when introducing new techniques, methods of work or procedures. Medical practice is evolving very rapidly on the basis of technology and the introduction of practices to increase safety and quality require training and retraining. That is why continuing education must accompany this process of change. It is necessary for the training to be based on modern didactic methods and means, through which to guarantee the increase of the professional competencies.

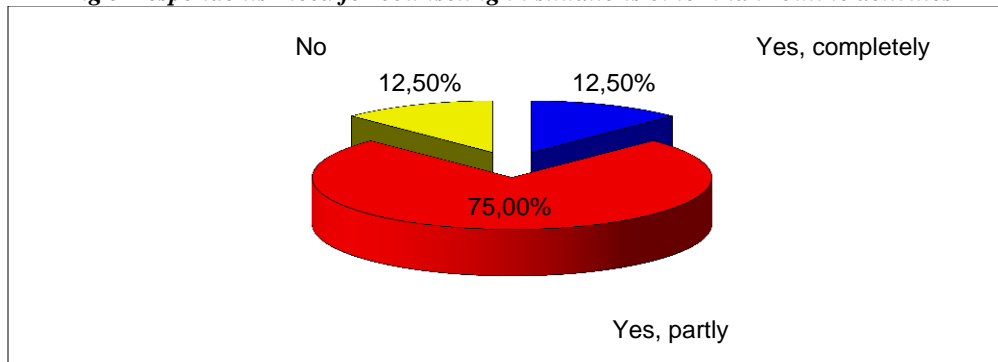
Fig 4 Carrying out activities by respondents for whom they are not trained



We can definitely conclude that healthcare professionals do not perform activities for which they are not trained. A significant part of the respondents answered that the training is partial, but they still participate in this process. Healthcare professionals are responsible for complying with certain norms and rules that ensure patient safety and the quality of healthcare. These requirements require training and continuous professional development in accordance with changes in regulations, regulations and standards.

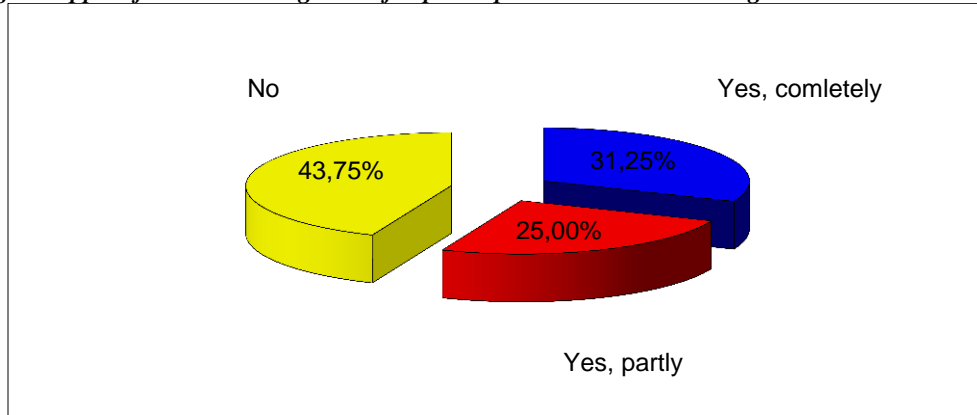
Continuing education should also be aimed at developing the professional skills of specialists in dealing with non-standard situations that may arise in a hospital setting. The COVID-19 pandemic posed new challenges to hospital management and healthcare professionals. The skills for quick adaptation and making adequate decisions are a guarantee for dealing with situations that have arisen.

Fig 5 Respondents' need for counseling in situations other than routine activities



A significant part of the respondents are of the opinion that they have only a partial need for consultations in situations that arise in practice, which are significantly different from the daily routine activities. A small part of the respondents answered this question in a completely positive and negative way. In the framework of continuing education, programs should be developed that are aimed at addressing cases and situations that require certain strategies and approaches to deal with and achieve positive results. In this way, the professional competencies of healthcare professionals are also increased.

Fig. 6 Support from the management for participation in the continuing education courses



The data show that the highest is the relative share of the respondents, who indicate that they do not receive support from the management of the medical institution for participation in the continuing education courses. More than a third of the respondents give a positive answer, and a quarter of the respondents give a partial answer. These results clearly show the need to develop staff training programs and make continuing education one of the priorities of health management teams.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Healthcare professionals believe that continuing education allows them to increase their professional knowledge and skills, but it is necessary to update curricula and offer courses that reflect the latest developments in medical practice. It is also necessary for hospital managements to stimulate and support the activity of specialists to participate in continuing education, thus ensuring the quality of health care for patients. Continuing education should provide healthcare professionals with training programs that reflect both new competencies and provide opportunities to discuss different case studies and develop strategies to deal with more complex situations, such as the pandemic. COVID -19.

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