




An approach to the actuality of the management by values in Cuban Public Health

Un acercamiento a la actualidad de la dirección por valores en la Salud Pública cubana

Uma abordagem ao estado atual da gestão baseada em valores na Saúde Pública Cubana

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: values-based management in public health is part of the third major reform of health education. It consists of collaborative and interprofessional decision-making based on the norms and principles of healthcare systems, which is connected to distributed leadership. It underpins a practice that guarantees Comprehensive Healthcare focused on the individual, the family, and the community.

Objective: to substantiate the need for values-based management in Cuban healthcare institutions as an axiological basis for effective interprofessional collaborative practice.

Method: a documentary review was conducted in English and Spanish in various databases: Google Scholar, SciELO, and the National Health Information Network (Infomed). The information was systematized, and critical inferences were drawn from the authors consulted regarding healthcare management and medical ethics. **Results:** values-based leadership in health under current conditions

requires empowerment in interprofessional collaborative practice in different settings and becomes a support for quality care as demanded by society and health systems, and is a necessary requirement for quality and safe care. Values-based leadership mainstreams the coordination, integration, and fusion of useful knowledge among different health professionals. A close connection between health institutions and other territorial actors is required based on the alignment of competencies, resources, and infrastructure to improve health services. **Conclusions:** values-based leadership in Cuban Public Health under current complex conditions mainstreams sustainable interprofessional collaborative practice in health services at all levels of care within the health system.

Keywords: values-based leadership; medical ethics; interprofessional collaborative practice; distributed leadership



RESUMEN

Introducción: la dirección por valores en Salud Pública se enmarca en la tercera gran reforma de la educación sanitaria. Consiste en la toma de decisiones colaborativas e interprofesionales basada en las normas y principios de los sistemas sanitarios, que se conecta con el liderazgo distribuido. **Objetivo:** fundamentar la necesidad de la dirección por valores en las instituciones de salud en Cuba como base axiológica de una práctica colaborativa interprofesional. **Método:** se efectuó un estudio documental en idioma inglés y español en diversas bases de datos: Google Académico, SciELO y Red Nacional de Información en Salud (Infomed). Se sistematizaron las informaciones y asumieron inferencias críticas de los autores consultados sobre la dirección en salud y la deontología médica. **Resultados:** la dirección por valores en salud en las condiciones actuales exige del empoderamiento en una práctica colaborativa interprofesional en diferentes escenarios y deviene en soporte para la atención de calidad según demanda la sociedad y los sistemas de salud, y es un requisito necesario para una atención de calidad y segura. La dirección por valores transversaliza la coordinación, integración y fusión de saberes útiles entre distintos profesionales de la salud. Se requiere un estrecho nexo entre las instituciones de salud y otros actores territoriales en función de una alineación de competencias, recursos e infraestructura para mejorar los servicios de salud. **Conclusiones:** la dirección por valores en la Salud Pública cubana en las complejas condiciones actuales transversaliza la práctica colaborativa interprofesional sostenible en los servicios salubristas en todos los niveles de atención del sistema de salud.

Palabras clave: dirección por valores; deontología médica; práctica colaborativa interprofesional; liderazgo distribuido

RESUMO

Introdução: a gestão baseada em valores na saúde pública faz parte da terceira grande reforma da educação em saúde. Envolve tomada de decisão colaborativa e interprofissional baseada nos padrões e princípios dos sistemas de saúde, o que está conectado à liderança distribuída. **Objetivo:** estabelecer a necessidade de uma gestão baseada em valores nas instituições de saúde cubanas como base axiológica para uma prática colaborativa interprofissional. **Método:** foi realizado um estudo documental em inglês e espanhol em diversas bases de dados: Google Acadêmico, SciELO e Rede Nacional de Informação em Saúde (Infomed). As informações foram sistematizadas e inferências críticas foram extraídas dos autores consultados sobre gestão de saúde e ética médica. **Resultados:** a gestão baseada em valores em saúde nas condições atuais requer o empoderamento na prática colaborativa interprofissional em diferentes cenários e se torna um suporte para um atendimento de qualidade, conforme exigido pela sociedade e pelos sistemas de saúde, sendo um requisito necessário para um atendimento de qualidade e seguro. A gestão baseada em valores abrange a coordenação, integração e fusão de conhecimentos úteis entre diferentes profissionais de saúde. É necessário um relacionamento próximo entre as instituições de saúde e outros stakeholders regionais, baseado no alinhamento de competências, recursos e infraestrutura para melhorar os serviços de saúde. **Conclusões:** a gestão baseada em valores na Saúde Pública Cubana, nas complexas condições atuais, integra a prática colaborativa interprofissional sustentável nos serviços de saúde em todos os níveis de atenção do sistema de saúde.

Palavras-chave: gestão de valores; ética médica; prática colaborativa interprofissional; liderança distribuída

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INTRODUCTION

The new Public Health Law of Cuba is presented as a tool to guarantee and protect the right to health of the population, adapting to contemporary realities and seeking to improve the quality of life of citizens in a context of socioeconomic challenges. For this reason, it is necessary to align the objectives and goals of each institution with the values and principles of the workers, both in the country and in international circumstances.⁽¹⁾

In this Guevarian approach as a backbone in the current complex conditions, rigid rules are replaced by shared values, which guide the behavior of the institution and encourage collaborative and interprofessional work that extends beyond the institutional spheres in terms of partnerships with different actors in the territory. The 2030 Agenda for sustainable development in one of its points: health and well-being calls for a change in the style of development, establishing a transformative action towards economic, social and environmental sustainability, ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages.⁽²⁾

Health management faces a complex environment, characterized by political, economic, social and environmental challenges. In spite of these difficulties, the Cuban health system has demonstrated its capacity to respond to different situations due to natural and anthropogenic causes, which imply a health management with its own characteristics, such as:⁽³⁾

- a) Health management focuses on primary care based on promoting health and preventing diseases from an adequate holistic, integrative, salutogenic approach, which implies not only the absence of disease, but a comprehensive state of well-being that includes physical, mental, environmental and social dimensions.
- b) Health management implies an aligned management of human, material and financial resources, which is crucial to respond to the demands of the population and optimize the use of available resources, especially in scenarios of multi-cultural constraints.
- c) Managers in the health sector must promote resilience in the face of threats and challenges. This includes the ability to make timely and correct decisions in times of crisis, as well as to lead institutional changes that respond to the growing needs of society.
- d) The active involvement of the various community actors is fundamental in health management. It improves patient satisfaction, and also makes it possible to diagnose and prioritize health needs, which is fundamental for the efficient management of health programs.
- e) Health management requires a collaborative and interprofessional approach, integrating different areas of knowledge and collaborating with different territorial actors in terms of health. This is vital to comprehensively address the health problems affecting the population.
- f) The permanent evaluation of health services and the implementation of continuous improvements are essential elements in health management. It involves analyzing the impact of programs and adjusting strategic and operational actions to respond to national and international goals.
- g) Health management should be guided by bioethical principles and a vocation of service, prioritizing the welfare of patients and the community. It becomes a moral commitment to the quality of care and to the continuous improvement of the health services provided.



In the authors' opinion, it is important to point out that the Cuban health system faces significant multicausal challenges, such as the economic, financial and unfair blockade that limits access to resources and technologies, the movement of qualified personnel to other scenarios. However, the direction of Public Health in Cuba continues to focus on continuous improvement and adaptation to new realities, always seeking to guarantee the constitutional right of health to the population.

This is a permanent process that begins with the care and education of children at school, home, family and extends to undergraduate training and reaches postgraduate education, highlighting its humanistic approach, which seeks that each worker internalizes the deontological meanings and senses and takes them to the health practice. The aforementioned approach, although disclosed in works of events, articles and courses, is used in the different levels of health care.

For health professionals, it is not only important to receive undergraduate and postgraduate training that contributes to the strengthening of their humanistic formation, but it is also necessary that health care actors manage to insert in their socio-professional practice the ethical process that underlies the doctor-patient relationship.

METHOD

A qualitative documentary review with an evaluative component was carried out with the aim of substantiating the need for management by values in health institutions in Cuba as an axiological basis for an effective interprofessional collaborative practice that contributes to a sustainable and inclusive integral medical care, taking into account the documentary studies carried out of systematic reviews in specialized databases and national and international web, of original articles, meta-analysis, conferences, SciELO, PubMed/MedLine, Redalyc and Infomed, the search was carried out during the period from January to August 2024.

The key words were: value-based leadership, medical deontology, interprofessional collaborative practice, distributed leadership in professional contexts. Limits were established in the search: related to language (Spanish, English) and time: (published in the last ten years), emphasis on the last five years, looking for topicality of the subject.

Of the total of 1,281 documents found, 123 were reviewed, selected taking into account that their title and abstract were related to the article, as well as complying with the strategy that their objective should be related to leadership by values in Cuban Public Health in the current complex conditions.

Classical texts specialized in the subject were also reviewed, as well as Cuban historical-social-political-health literature.

Twenty-five updated references were selected, which made it possible to systematize management by values based on interprofessionalism and collaborative practice in decision-making in health institutions in Cuba.



In the bibliographies consulted, the indicators were analyzed reflexively according to their level of relevance: cognitive and instrumental, contextual, experiential and the normative ethical implications according to the national and international health contexts.

A reflexive algorithm was defined on value-based management as a specific skill in decision making in health institutions based on the need for selection and analysis of the bibliography, acceptance of the referents, reading of texts and summaries, as well as the verification of their relevance, and then it was proceeded the drafting of the scientific text.

DEVELOPMENT

Management by values is a distributed leadership approach that focuses on aligning the objectives of an institution with the values and principles of its employees. This humanistic model seeks to create a collaborative work environment, in which the different actors feel involved and motivated to belong to a responsible and ethical entity, which in turn increases their commitment and efficiency.⁽⁴⁾

The authors believe that distributed leadership as a shared responsibility in health is an approach that promotes collaboration and the active participation of all members of an institution in decision-making and the execution of tasks.

In this sense, it is prudent to specify the different considerations that underline the importance of values in the management of Public Health in Cuba:

- Values as the core of the management of health institutions: this approach contains the need to integrate values in the management of the entities, emphasizing how these can give meaning to action and foster a collaborative and interprofessional environment, which underlines the significance of values in the management and in the institutional culture itself, which is distinguished as the set of values, beliefs, practices and norms of the members of a health institution.
- Leadership and values for health managers: reflects on the exercise of distributed leadership in the health sector, highlighting the need to consolidate the cognitive-instrumental, emotional-volitional and ethical-normative aspects of decision making in health organizations. Effective communication and collaboration are required to motivate workers and achieve organizational objectives.



The following are the requirements of value-based management in the healthcare context:⁽⁵⁾

- Collaborative: it does not focus on a single person, but distributes power and authority among several members of the interprofessional team, allowing each one to contribute his or her strengths and skills.
- Relational: focuses more on interpersonal relationships than on individual actions, fostering an environment of trust, collaboration and consensus.
- Decentralized: it moves away from the traditional hierarchy of power, promoting a more symmetrical and collaborative model, where all actors are involved in decisions.
- Contextualized: it adapts to the specific needs and characteristics of each health institution, recognizing that there is no single model that works in all contexts.
- The authors consider that the requirement of value-based management in the health care context requires tools that allow it to be applied as a single management system with reasonable flexibility for the entire health care system.

It is imperative to insist that the socio-humanistic character of management in health is a multi-causal challenge throughout the undergraduate and graduate training of personnel in Higher Education, so it is necessary to provide decision-makers with an axiological thinking that allows them to understand the ethical basis of their performance in a work environment of increasing complexity and demands, which is distinguished by dangers, vulnerabilities and risks.

It is the authors' opinion that this management philosophy promotes an institutional culture where ethical and humanistic principles are fundamental for making correct and timely decisions in the management of the different levels of health.

Through this approach, the aim is not only to improve the quality of services, but also to foster a work environment in which all actors -from managers to health workers- feel committed and motivated to contribute to the wellbeing of the population, considering the sociocultural conditions in the health-disease process from a personalized point of view.

This humanistic model of management becomes a normative ethical tool in the different current contexts, where the transformations in the health system require a greater moral sensitivity towards collaborative and interprofessional practice, as the real interconnection between all levels of the institution is essential to achieve comprehensive and quality care, aligned with the principles and goals of Cuban Public Health.⁽⁶⁾

It is considered that Management by Values is seen as an integrating approach in health institutions: it emphasizes the assertive communication of the content of values, which are essential to reinforce spirituality in the functioning of the institutions. It is worth noting the importance of cementing a culture based on values to improve the management, commitment and sense of belonging of the workers.



Theoretical and practical thinking in the strategic and operational dynamics of socio-professional practice has contributed to the systematization of an axiological approach to value-based management in the field of health. And to this extent, creative thinking is required, and the need for a deontological interpretation in the solution of health problems, which are aimed at improving the comprehensive care of services at different levels in a collaborative and interprofessional environment from the implementation of a distributed leadership, becomes increasingly evident^(7,8)

Management by values implies creating techno-scientific capabilities to replace rigid and verticalized norms with principles that guide the behavior of employees. The aim is to ensure that the strategic and operational institutional objectives are in line with the values shared by the work teams and that they provide support in the functional management of conflicts in the achievement of the objectives.⁽⁵⁾

In this line of thought, Pérez Sánchez and Martín Linares⁽³⁾ refer that the evaluative reflection of reality has two forms of significance: objective social significance, whose content of the reflection is mediated by the cognitive component, and a significance for the subject that is conditioned by the needs, interests and purposes of the valuing subject, which constitutes the non-cognitive component.

The aforementioned authors state that it is necessary to consider that value has a dichotomous character, so that it can have a positive social connotation and a negative social connotation (anti-value). In the health institution there is a hierarchy of values, since these can be high and low; so that values are relative, since they constitute the object of critical reflection, so we can say that they have a concrete historical character, vary depending on the normative, personal needs, professional interests, affective-emotional and the wealth of experiences accumulated by the subject, all of which makes it possible to establish a comparative pattern.

Therefore, value as a phenomenon of social conscience orients the socio-professional performance of men in determined contexts, constitutes the referents that condition their conduct and is an ideological expression of their socio-professional interests.⁽⁹⁾

In correspondence with the above, the following can be pointed out among the fundamental characteristics of management by values:^(4,5,10)

- Humanizes the overall objective of the institution: prioritizes the professional and humanistic development of the health personnel.
- Promotes the commitment and motivation of the workers: improves the quality of the different services.
- Seeks a balance between profits and contribution to society.
- It distributes responsibility to each member of the institution.

Each of the aforementioned characteristics allows for a better professional performance of the personnel, and leads to the promotion of integral values that have an impact on the quality of the services provided in public health, which directly or indirectly have to do with the patient.



The essential elements of management by values include:^(4,5,10)

- Institutional culture: it is based on the culture of the entity, which includes the internalization of its mission, vision and fundamental values. This allows human resources strategies to be aligned with the corporate identity.
- Distributed strategic leadership: leaders should act as role models by promoting and practicing the institution's values to empower praxis towards collaborative and interprofessional work.

Among the benefits of value-based management in healthcare^(4,5,10) are the commitment of the collective by integrating values into management and achieving greater commitment on the part of the personnel, which translates into a more positive and productive work environment, and improved productivity with the alignment of values and objectives that can increase the efficiency and results of the institution.

The implementation of value-based management in healthcare can follow several phases, including the definition of precise objectives - goals, values and communication - the development of action plans - strategies and tactics, resources and training - and the creation of a control system - indicators, evaluation and stimulation - to measure activities, results and impacts.^(11,12)

With regard to the challenges of value-based management in healthcare, it is essential to prevent values from becoming abstract concepts with no application in professional practice when making sound and timely decisions. Health care institutions must ensure that values are translated into indicators that measure observable behaviors in professional performance.^(11,12)

In general, it can be affirmed that management by values is a tool that seeks to humanize decision making, since it promotes a scenario where collaborators feel recognized and motivated, which in turn benefits the health care institution.

The integration of humanistic values in the training of health professionals in Cuba is approached through several approaches and methodologies that emphasize the importance of these values in medical practice and education, which are subsequently expressed in the use of management tools, such as:^(10,13)

Integral and humanistic training

Medical management in Cuba, as a pedagogical activity, is characterized by an integral approach that combines scientific training with ethics and humanistic values. That is why contextualized undergraduate and graduate curricula require not only health sciences, but also social sciences, promoting a work-based education that emphasizes solidarity, internationalism and moral commitment of graduates.^(14,15)



Continuous process of values education

Values education is seen as a continuous process that begins in the family and extends throughout undergraduate and graduate academic training. This approach seeks to develop in students a deep understanding of the ethics and humanistic principles that should guide their professional practice in the various national and international scenarios.⁽¹⁶⁾

Performance of educators

Teachers play a crucial role in the formation of humanistic values. Educators are expected to act as role models, demonstrating through their behavior the values they wish to instill in their students. This includes ethics, sensitivity and solidarity, which are essential to the practice of medicine.

Focus on social practice

Medical students in Cuba are immersed in real patient care scenarios from early stages of their training. This not only allows them to apply their knowledge, but also helps them develop a humanistic and caring attitude when interacting with patients and communities.

Impact of humanistic values in the professional practice of health care

The institutional and personalized transformation by the health services offered is measured through several ways and approaches that evaluate both the quality indicators through the satisfaction of the population with the services received, which can be quantified and qualified as follows:

Evaluation of the quality of care

Humanistic values such as empathy, respect and solidarity are fundamental in Cuban medical care. Quality of care is measured by means of surveys and other studies that evaluate the perception of patients and family members on the care received. This includes aspects such as doctor-patient communication and the communicational capacity of the staff to address the patient's emotional and physical needs.⁽¹⁷⁾

Qualitative research

Research that includes interviews and focus groups with patients and health personnel: This research provides a deeper understanding of how humanistic values translate into clinical practice and how they affect the patient-physician relationship. The diverse testimonies of patients about their experiences with physicians and other health personnel, especially in international cooperation contexts, are an important indicator for measuring the impact of medical services.



Training and professional practice

The training of Cuban physicians includes a significant component of on-the-job education, which is evaluated through the observation of its application in clinical practice. The increasing insertion of students in real patient care scenarios makes it possible to observe how these values are implemented in real situations and how they influence the quality of services.

Public Health Outcomes

The impact of sociohumanistic values can also be measured through public health indicators that express improvement in the health outcomes of the target population. Precisely, care at the different levels of the Cuban health system is based on these values and has proven to be effective in health promotion and disease prevention.⁽¹⁸⁾

Commitment and satisfaction of health personnel

Physicians' satisfaction and commitment to their work are reflections of the impact of sociohumanistic values. Studies have shown that health personnel who adhere to these values tend to report greater job satisfaction and a sense of purpose in their performance, which in turn translates into higher quality care for patients.

International comparisons

The contrast between Cuban medical practice and that of other countries, such as Brazil, also provides information on the impact of socio-humanist values. Cuban physicians abroad are often perceived as more committed and empathetic in their treatment of patients, which is directly related to their training in humanistic values.

In summary, the impact of sociohumanistic values on the clinical practice of Cuban physicians is measured through evaluations of quality of care, qualitative research, health service outcomes and satisfaction of both patients and health professionals. These approaches allow for a complex and multicausal understanding of how these meanings and senses influence medical care and the health of the population both in Cuba and abroad.⁽¹⁹⁾

On the other hand, it is important to recognize the usefulness of ethics as a discipline that studies morality, which is divided into normative ethics and moral theory. The first specifies the problem of good and evil, establishes the moral code of conduct, and outlines which aspirations are worthy. The second investigates the essence of the latter, its origin and development, the laws to which its norms obey and its concrete historical character.

Therefore, in institutional health management it is necessary to reconsider the precepts of medical ethics, which is constituted by norms and pertinent behaviors among health workers and in their relations with patients and society. In decision-making, it is supported by medical deontology, which is composed of the specific duties of health care workers.⁽²⁰⁾



In this sense, the principle of the integrality of the physician's care to the patient includes respect, understanding and affection, and is materialized in the socio-human care through collaborative and interprofessional reflection, which implies a casuistic analysis of each individual. Based on non-maleficence, autonomy and justice at a given moment of the doctor-patient relationship, taking into account the personalized nature of each case.^(21,22)

CONCLUSIONS

Management by values as a health socioprofessional competence is a necessity in view of the current complex health situations in Cuba. This management tool demands the assumption of new useful socio-humanist knowledge in the training of undergraduate and postgraduate professionals, in order to contribute to the strengthening of collaborative and interprofessional management at the different levels of health care, so that it contributes to an effective and sustainable institutional practice in holistic integral medical care consistent with the development of current medicine.

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