

Co-created responses to crisis situations

Episode 2 of the webinar series
'Health Management in action: Fostering health systems' resilience'

Speaker

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The second episode of the webinar series 'Health Management in action: Fostering health system's resilience' focused on crisis management and the role of leadership and governance in navigating emergencies and reaching solutions.

The governance angle

Leadership is key in crisis management. A must-have leadership skill is to remain focused on the vision, the goals and the strategy to achieve set objectives. However, during crises, the management team has to deal with the unknown, which is a risk element to take into account alongside safeguarding the reputation of the organisation. Governance must also ensure stakeholders' and shareholders' confidence, as they need to trust leaders' determination and efforts to get back to business as usual. Furthermore, during a crisis, staff needs support and this can vary depending to the size and structure of the organisation. Finally, governance must ensure the respect of regulatory requirements that have the power to enhance the organisation's resilience.

The 3 Cs in crisis

A crisis always requires a response at executive level which can be articulated through different models of governance. Crisis management can be summarised in '**3 Cs**': **Communicate, Command, and Control**. **Communication** is essential in crisis management as it allows the organisation to remain aware of the management's vision and plans and what is expected from the staff. **Command** means that authority is vested in an individual that sets the direction, coordination and control of the response to a crisis. This usually applies when there is a highly critical incident that affects the whole organisation. Differently, **control** outlines what needs to be achieved, leaving the staff some leeway to develop their own framework to deal with the crisis. The level of control depends on the risk management scalability of the emergency situation.

Proper leadership requires a clear framework that pays attention to tasks, the team and individuals' needs. Leaders have a crucial responsibility to support their staff, who are at the frontline of service delivery in healthcare organisations. As such, staff's mental health and well-being is essential and leaders should have it as a priority.

Fluidity and a multidomain full spectrum approach are required in the command and control process to manage a crisis. In the early stages of a crisis, it is likely to adopt a command approach while keeping a (1) traditional, hierarchical structure. But soon in crisis management, there may be the need for (2) adaptative teams within the hierarchy to harness ideas in a thinking space. Such governance framework should evolve into (3) networking adaptative teams under the control of a collaborative commander. Eventually,

the leader will benefit from the teams' ideas and insight. Leaders should also build multi-safety nets within their organisations to foster resilience.

Crisis-management governance

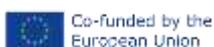
Crisis-management governance should be concept-driven, adopt cross-defence lines of development, be resource-aware, experimentally developed, research-informed, support-enabled, evidence-based, programmatically managed, strategically aligned, and develop a framework that allows the organisation to learn. The integrated emergency management cycle is a different way of thinking that foresees: anticipate future crises, assess possible scenarios, prevent the impact, prepare mentally, respond, and recover. The recovery phase is essential to strengthening the organisation ahead of future crises.

To lead in a crisis, **governance needs to listen, learn, and lead**. The ideas to solve a crisis come from the team, but the governance body leads by being an example. During a crisis management situation, words and actions should align. What matters most in **a crisis response plan is 'KISS': Keep It Simple and Short**. Whoever the leaders, the plan has to be absolutely specific, and to be communicated to and understandable by the staff.

Leadership may face two types of crises. In internal crises, the priority is to define what business-as-usual looks like and to collaborate within the team to come to a solution. External crises may require command and control simultaneously.

Take-home messages

- A crisis always requires an executive level of response. Therefore, governance has a unique role to play to manage risks and maintain reputation, safeguard stakeholders' and shareholders' confidence, support the staff, and ensure compliance with regulatory requirements.
- There are '3 Cs' that are essential in crisis management: communication, command, and control, and '3 Ls' in the governance response to a crisis: listen, learn, and lead. Additionally, crisis management plans should follow the KISS rule: Keep it Short and Simple.
- While the definition of business as usual and collaboration is predominant in internal crises management; external crises are more often addressed through a command and control approach.



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