

Implementation of research and development in primary care

by means of strategic communication

AKADEMISK AVHANDLING

som för avläggande av medicine doktorsexamen
vid Sahlgrenska akademien, Göteborgs universitet,
kommer att offentligen försvaras på Avdelningen för allmänmedicin,
Hus 2, sal 2119, Hälsovetarbacken, Göteborg,
fredagen den 26 oktober 2012, kl 13.00.

av

Helena Morténus

Fakultetsopponent

Professor Bodil Wilde-Larsson,
fakulteten för samhälls- och livsvetenskaper,
avdelningen för omvårdnad, Karlstad universitet

Avhandlingen baseras på följande delstudier:

- I. Morténus, H, Marklund, B, Palm, L, Fridlund, B, Baigi, A. The utilization of knowledge of and interest in research and development among primary care staff by means of strategic communication: a staff cohort study. *Journal of Evaluation in Clinical Practice*. 2012; 18:768-75. (e-pub 23 Febr, 2011)
- II. Morténus, H, Marklund, B, Palm, L, Björkelund, C, Baigi, A. The implementation of innovative attitudes and behaviour in primary health care by means of strategic communication: a seven-year follow-up. *Journal of Evaluation in Clinical Practice* 2012; 18; 659-65. (e-pub 21 Jan, 2011)
- III. Morténus, H, Baigi, A, Palm, L, Fridlund, B, Björkelund, C, Hedberg, B. Impact of the organisational culture on primary care staff members' intention to engage in research and development (submitted).
- IV. Morténus, H, Fridlund, B, Marklund, B, Palm, L, Baigi, A. Utilisation of strategic communication to create willingness to change work practices among primary-care staff: a long-term follow-up study. *Primary Health Care Research and Development* 2012; 13(2):130-41. (e-pub 30 Jan, 2012)

Göteborg 2012



UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG

Implementation of research and development in primary care by means of strategic communication

Helena Morténus, Department of Public Health and Community Medicine, Institute of Medicine, Sahlgrenska Academy at the University of Gothenburg, Göteborg, Sweden

Background: Health and medical care today is faced with the challenge of bridging the gap between the theoretical world and the practical clinical setting. Although methods exist for implementing research results, the actual implementation process is not always optimal. Thus, in order to create a more positive attitude to research and new thinking among health care professionals, it is necessary to identify barriers and possibilities as well as explore new strategies. Strategic communication can be utilised to create knowledge of and interest in research and development (R&D) as a first step towards new thinking and willingness to change work practices, for the benefit of patients.

Aim: The overall aim of this thesis was to describe, follow up and evaluate the implementation of R&D among primary care staff by means of strategic communication.

Methods: *The intervention process.* A staff cohort comprising all employees (N=1,276) was initiated in 1997. The intervention was based on strategic communication, which is a relatively new field of knowledge. The field is interdisciplinary and the basis is a theoretical platform originating in communication science as well as sociology, psychology and political science. Oral, written and digital communication channels were used. The study design was longitudinal to allow follow-up and evaluation of the influence of strategic communication over time on staff members' intention to engage in R&D, measured 7 and 12 years after the start of the strategic communication. *The intervention context:* A primary care organisation in southwest Sweden. *Data collection and analysis:* A questionnaire comprising fixed response alternatives in combination with an open-ended question. Multivariate tests were employed to analyse the answers to the fixed response alternatives and qualitative content analysis was applied to the open-ended question. An ethnographic study comprising observations, interviews and analysis of documents was conducted to elucidate the significance of the organisational culture in the studied context.

Results: Strategic communication contributed to almost all primary care staff gaining knowledge of R&D, more than half of whom became interested in the subject. The intervention also resulted in more than half of the primary care staff members developing new thoughts and ideas and a third of them had changed or intended to change their work practices (7 year follow-up). This positive attitude increased over time and every second staff member exhibited an intention to engage in R&D at the 12 year follow-up. All results were statistically significant. The influence of the communication channels and their synergy effect played a significant role in the change process, although to varying degrees. The organisational culture emerged as an important factor, influencing the values and attitudes in relation to the intention to engage in R&D.

Conclusion: Strategic communication contributed to a significant change among all primary care staff in terms of intention to change work practices and engage in R&D. The primary care staff members' attitude to change also developed during the 12 year intervention.

Keywords: barriers, communication channels, evidence-to-practice gap, follow-up, implementation, innovative attitudes, intervention, longitudinal study, organisational culture, primary care staff cohorts, research and development, strategic communication.

ISBN: 978-91-628-8490-1