

How and why will hospitals have changed in Spain by 2029?



MS. ROSER FERNANDEZ
DIRECTOR GENERAL
LA UNIO



We are not talking about mere changes, but actual transformations. This is a full-blown revolution, if we define revolution as the need to provide a comprehensive response to a whole range of deep, fast-paced changes.

These changes do not affect hospitals alone. They have to be addressed in the wider framework of a revolution in how we understand the model of care and how we organize resources.

The main challenges in this process of hospital transformation must deal with the following issues:

Financial sustainability and adequate staffing in a context of public budgets which do not suffice to meet the growing costs of care and I+D, compounded with inadequate planning in the training of healthcare professionals, which simply does not meet present and future needs. These are issues that health authorities cannot simply transfer to the health organizations.

Tailoring services and resources to the new role of the hospital in this framework of global transformation: the traditional hospital model is not suitable anymore. Changes are needed in the model of service delivery. Hospitals need to focus increasingly on surgery, while also standardizing processes, as well as addressing a broader range of services, personalized medicine and healthcare, in a context of growing complexity. Modalities of health service delivery are multiplying, with primary and community care, intermediate care replacing hospital in-patient care, home care, mobile health opportunities and non-presential healthcare, all taking on an ever more central role. Values and strategies to attract and retain talent are also changing, and networking and partnership alliances are becoming crucial to provide comprehensive, patient-focused care, as well as tackling I+D.

The strategic integration of the digital transformation and its impact on work organization, professional roles, skills and competencies, and the relationship model between professionals and patients.

What is key to meeting these challenges successfully? First, understanding the need for leading and anticipating these changes not as a burden, but as an opportunity to improve the quality and efficiency of service providing. From this starting point, design a strategy, in close collaboration with the main client (the health authority, if dealing with a public healthcare system), and incorporate the voice of the professionals and

the patients, to guide the decision-making process towards the factors that bring true value. It is key, therefore, to talk in terms of assessment and results, which is what ultimately lends legitimacy to such changes.

To tackle transformational, even disruptive changes, we need a sound knowledge of future trends. Based on this knowledge, we can design a strategy, pair it with a viability plan, and generate a stable consensus. Uncertainty in financial and political areas is a hindrance, especially when it comes to questions of strategic model, healthcare policies, and funding. Short-term decisions based on the electoral cycles and populism prevent organizations from daring to embrace change. La Unió's +FUTUR Project aims to identify trends and priority action areas, and then support organizations in this process, by sharing good practice know-how and creating synergies. It aims to contribute to improving the national healthcare system by looking into the future with a worldwide view, by becoming a reference in projects that show the way of change, and by promoting regulatory and functional changes. In short, to make things happen.

We believe that the 44th WHC of the IHF, meeting in November 2020 in Barcelona under the slogan "People on board: Transforming Healthcare," will be a momentous opportunity to share experiences in this process of hospital transformation, and push for a greater, deeper, collective commitment.

About La Unió Catalana d'Hospitals

La Unió Catalana d'Hospitals is a membership association of health and social care services providers, gathering more than 100 healthcare organizations, integrating mostly health providers of the public Catalan healthcare system, but also private healthcare organizations. It was created in 1975 as a healthcare providers' association, to work together and promote a quality healthcare and social model to benefit the Catalan society.

Its key strategic areas are the defense of its members' legitimate interests, and strengthening the Catalan healthcare and social model.

As a health and social services providers association, La Unió defends a public healthcare system, built with the contribution of civil society, on the basis of an autonomous management of the health providers, a strict ethical performance, and promoting excellence in healthcare management through professionalization and supporting innovation for its members.