The Future of Healthcare in the Next Decade

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Major Challenges in Healthcare Transformation

A. Increasing commercialization: due to privatization or the inability of public owners to invest in hospitals, there is growing pressure to optimize hospitals for profit, rather than to serve the medical needs of its patients and the communities they are in. Certain reimbursement methods for hospital stays or treatments facilitate this trend.

B. Shifting in-patient care to out-patient care will bring hospitals in competition with specialized practices and polyclinics, especially with an ongoing concentration of hospitals (hospitals may no longer be locally available) and at the same time an increasing patient demand for on-time services.

C. Anti-Microbial Resistance, AMR.

D. Hospitals (and not only) will be confronted with more violence (verbal and physical) and intrusion, especially cyber-attacks.

Opportunities and Solutions

A. Defining the societal role of health care and hospitals and shifting the financing of hospital care to serving the health needs of the population and the patients.

B. Taking a lead in developing out-patient services and staying relevant and reachable in the region.

C. Improving hospital design, infection control, and political action to avoid AMR in hospitals and other sectors of health care, but more important (quantitatively) in farming and food production.

D. Undertaking measure to avoid violence, to de-escalate it and to protect staff. Keeping IT systems up-to-date and proactively prepare for attacks with appropriate strategies.

Uncertainties

A. Commercialization and financing structures are not in the hands of the hospitals. This is a political decision that has to be made.

B. Hospitals that do not deliver the services that are in need and which have less patient demand will vanish.

C. If prevention and mitigation strategies are not taken seriously, AMR will remain a real threat to patients, and hospital success will be reduced, if not set back.

D. Hospitals are already difficult and not necessarily attractive workplaces. Increasing violence may make them even more unattractive.