

CORE SERVICES / INFRASTRUCTURE

HUMAN RESOURCES

Contributors: Diana Elder, Evelyne Jhung, Amanda Chudak,
Meena Merali, Joann Trypuc, Mary Gospodarowicz

HUMAN RESOURCES

A. INTRODUCTION	2
B. BEST PRACTICES	2
C. THE FUTURE	7
D. REFERENCES	7

A. INTRODUCTION

Cancer care requires a wide variety of highly-skilled health professionals to provide care and services to patients, including medical staff, nurses and many allied health professionals. In addition, staff working in administration, management, and clinical and non-clinical support areas, researchers, educators and volunteers all play an important role in enabling the delivery of cancer care. Human resource (HR) requirements relating to specific clinical and core services can be found in other *Cancerpedia* chapters.

B. BEST PRACTICES

A comprehensive HR program incorporates a number of best practice requirements, outlined in Figure 1 and below.

Figure 1: Human Resources Best Practice Requirements¹



HR Planning

HR planning helps to ensure that the cancer centre has the appropriate number and mix of qualified staff to meet the strategic and operational goals of the organization, and to serve its expected patient population. Effective HR planning minimizes staff shortages and surpluses, and lessens misalignments between available positions and the skills and abilities of incumbents.²

HR planning should consider healthcare trends that may impact the services provided by the cancer centre and, in turn, the education and skills required by the workforce to provide these services effectively and efficiently. These trends may include:

- Changing population demographics that translate to changing patient populations (e.g., growing, aging, more diverse)
- Changing cancer care needs
- Changing models of care (e.g., more outpatient, less invasive, collaborative service partnerships with other hospitals and community-based providers)
- Evolving ways of providing healthcare services (e.g., integrated care models, teams, new provider roles), which require clinical practice changes, HR flexibility and adaptability
- Increasingly sophisticated information systems and new technologies requiring less HR-intensive processes and different types of expertise

HR planning should also consider trends that may challenge the cancer centre's ability to keep the right number and skill-mix of staff, physicians and volunteers. These trends may include:

- Changing HR demographics, such as an aging, more diverse and multi-generational workforce, all with different needs
- An ongoing focus on accountability and the effective use of human and financial resources
- Increasing competition for skilled HR and labour shortages
- Labour surpluses
- Unionization of the workforce
- The skills and expertise of current staff, and their gaps in knowledge
- Increasing demand for updated skills, education and lifelong learning
- Increasing demand for volunteers and meeting their needs

HR planning must meet staffing standards, comply with the accreditation requirements of the jurisdiction in which the cancer centre is located, and uphold the arrangements set out in union agreements, which may include specific hiring, scheduling, placement, compensation, benefits, accommodation and management protocols and obligations. As well, HR planning must be linked to the cancer centre's strategic and operating plans. For recommendations on how to stimulate and guide the creation of jobs in healthcare, please refer to World Health Organization's Report of the High-Level Commission on Health Employment and Economic Growth *Working for health and growth: investing in the health workforce*.³

Job Analysis, Design and Job Descriptions

Effective job analysis and design supported by clear job descriptions can help the cancer centre achieve its goals and increase staff satisfaction.

Job analysis is the process of identifying the duties, responsibilities and human attributes required to perform a role.

Job design focuses on organizing work and modifying and enriching a job so that staff talents are used to their best advantage. Job design takes into account four core characteristics of a job: skills, tasks, autonomy and feedback. These characteristics make staff feel that they do meaningful work, that they are responsible for their work outcomes, and that their contributions are valued. Effective job design contributes to a satisfied, highly motivated and well-performing workforce.

Job descriptions set out the required specifications for a job, including the experience, skills and abilities, knowledge, tasks, duties, physical demands and use of equipment required. Job descriptions inform the cancer centre's recruitment, training and compensation planning.

Each job in the cancer centre should undergo job analysis and design, and have a clearly written job description.

Compensation and Benefits

The cancer centre's largest budget item is usually employee compensation and benefits. The goals for employee compensation and benefits are to:

- Pay staff for the work they have performed
- Reward staff for performing well and motivate them to continue
- Support staff with benefits that improve their health and quality of life, protect them from illness and positively impact their quality of work
- Provide management tools to improve performance

Staff compensation is made up of: i) direct financial payments, such as salaries and incentives; and ii) indirect payments, such as employer-paid insurance and vacation days.

Staff benefits may subsidize national healthcare plans by providing additional healthcare-related coverage (i.e., health and dental benefits). Other benefits may include life insurance, short-term and long-term disability payments, leave of absence payments and pension programs. The design of the cancer centre's benefits program is influenced by various factors, including the size of the organization, its location and legal requirements.

Compensation and benefits should contribute to achieving the cancer centre's strategic and operating goals, and align with current market rates for positions. A competitive and flexible compensation system is a key retention strategy. Competitive salaries along with a comprehensive benefits program improve staff work satisfaction, reduce staff turnover, and ensure that the organization is in a favourable competitive position for attracting and retaining skilled staff.

Ongoing Education to Maintain Competency and Professional Development

Cancer centres need to invest in their valuable human resources through ongoing education for all staff. This ensures that staff have the information and skills to perform their jobs well, and the knowledge and abilities to adopt new processes, systems, technologies and clinical practice developments. Continuous staff education tends to be a required standard for hospital accreditation. For example, Accreditation Canada (2015) requires that training and education to address specific patient safety focus areas be provided at least annually to leaders, team members and volunteers.⁴

To make strategic decisions about education, the cancer centre should assess education needs throughout the organization, including the education needs of leaders. Using the results of this needs assessment, the cancer centre should design and deliver targeted education programs. The cancer centre should also identify evaluation indicators and formally measure and monitor the impact of these programs.

Many methods can be used to educate staff, including on-the-job training, apprenticeship programs, classroom instruction and web-based online education modules. Leadership education programs tend to include course work, job rotations, executive coaching and behavioural skills development. See the *Cancerpedia: Education* chapter for additional information.

HR Policies and Programs

The cancer centre needs HR policies and programs to guide the activities of the organization and its staff.

HR policies are informed by the centre's culture and values, accreditation standards and legislative requirements. Policies ensure that staff understand the organization of the workplace, the behaviors and activities expected of them, and what they can expect of the organization. Well-defined policies that align with the organizational culture and values contribute to staff satisfaction and workplace harmony. Examples of common HR policies include:

- Code of conduct
- Workforce ethics
- Equity and diversity
- Conflict of interest
- Performance management
- Flexible work arrangements
- Vacation and leave policies

HR programs are formally organized activities that increase the capacity and capability of the cancer centre. HR programs enhance staff retention and support the development of a healthy workplace culture. Examples of common HR programs include:

- Attendance management
- Tuition refund
- Staff recognition

A key HR program is performance appraisal, which involves setting goals for each staff member, assessing their performance in meeting these goals, and providing feedback and developmental support. Individual staff education plans and discussions about career interests are an integral part of the performance appraisal program. Performance appraisals inform salary increases and individual career planning, help to identify top talent, and support succession planning for key leadership and non-leadership roles. The cancer centre should adopt a hospital-wide performance appraisal program for all staff.

Occupational Health and Safety

Cancer centre leadership and staff have a joint responsibility to ensure that the workplace is healthy, safe and free from hazards. Workplace accidents can severely impact injured workers and their families, reduce productivity in the workplace, and increase the costs associated with paid sick time and replacement workers.

Cancer centres must establish a comprehensive and effective health and safety program that includes preventative actions for healthy and safe working conditions, routine monitoring of workplace safety indicators and actions to address issues. In Canada, for example, this is governed by the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, an agency that promotes the physical, psychosocial and mental health of working Canadians by providing information, training, education, management systems and solutions that support health, safety and wellness programs.⁵

Orientation for New Staff

A formal staff orientation program must be developed at the organizational and departmental levels. An effective orientation program equips staff to become productive more quickly after hiring and contributes to work satisfaction. Formal staff orientation is usually a hospital accreditation requirement.

Organization-wide orientation programs should provide information on:

- The cancer centre's mission, values, goals and culture
- Policies, programs and practices that staff need to know
- The organization's code of conduct and expected behaviours of staff

Departmental orientation programs should familiarize staff with their work unit and new job and may take several days or weeks, depending on the skills required of staff and the responsibilities of the position. Web-based orientation programs are increasingly being used to support consistency in the information provided to staff and to facilitate ease of access for busy professionals.

Implementing good HR practices as an introduction to the organization supports the creation of an agile and engaged workforce, and creates an environment where people can do their best work and have confidence in their ability to meet their objectives.

Recruitment and Retention Tactics

Effective recruitment ensures that the cancer centre has the right person in the right job at the time when they are needed. Organizations should regularly conduct a workforce analysis, which includes:

- Identifying the current and future supply of labour and skills that are of interest to the organization (supply analysis)
- Determining what the organization needs now and in the future in terms of labour and skills (demand analysis)
- Analyzing the gaps between the current and future supply and demand (gap analysis)

Workforce analysis helps to identify potential recruitment challenges, such as labour shortages, and may influence internal HR initiatives.⁶ For example, to help attract recruits when there are labour shortages or positions that are difficult to fill, the organization may develop targeted recruitment strategies for positions and aggressively market the organization's employment brand. Organizations may also create a staff replacement pool for future vacancies.

Regular steps in the recruitment process include:

- Advertising for candidates using methods appropriate to the level of the job – e.g., a search firm may be hired to assist in recruiting senior executive leaders
- Reviewing all applicants and selecting those who appear to be most suitable for the position
- Interviewing the top candidates, and assessing their skills, competencies and fit for the organization
- Checking the final candidate's references
- Negotiating an employment offer

Effective retention strategies help reduce voluntary turnover and keep staff in the organization. As well, retention strategies ensure that the organization gets a good return on its investment in staff recruitment, education and development. Effective employment practices to support staff retention include: i) promoting from within; ii) pay-for-performance programs; iii) staff benefit programs; iv) education and development opportunities; and v) a collegial work environment.⁷ Providing staff with opportunities to advance in their career also promotes staff engagement.

HR Advisors

HR advisors contribute to well-functioning workplaces, effective staff-manager relationships and conflict resolution. Their responsibilities include:

- Advising and counselling managers who need to respond to staff issues
- Advising staff and representing their needs to managers, as required
- Advising leaders on organizational change initiatives
- Interpreting HR policy
- Implementing HR programs
- Interpreting HR legislative requirements

It is important that organizations retain the expertise required to effectively negotiate and manage contracts and relationships between the organization and staff unions. HR advisors play an important role in supporting the ongoing management of unionized staff in compliance with both the policies and programs of the organization and union agreements.

HR Information Systems

HR information systems (HRIS) include all HR-related data such as:

- Employee records, including job classifications, pay and benefits information, performance evaluations and progress reports
- Staff absences and changes in employment status
- Payroll processing

HRIS reports help to inform HR forecasting, strategic planning and organizational HR decisions. Organizations use their workforce data to develop multi-year succession plans to ensure they have a sustainable and productive workforce. Because of its sensitive nature, establishing and monitoring internal controls over HR information is important to safeguard against compromise and misuse.⁸

C. THE FUTURE

Healthcare trends will continue to impact the number and mix of professionals and staff needed by a cancer centre, as well as the expertise and skills required. Healthcare trends of note include the following:

- Healthcare models are changing from inpatient to outpatient care, from invasive to less invasive procedures, and from hospital-centric approaches to more collaborative care partnerships with other hospitals and community-based providers. For the cancer centre, this means fewer hospitalizations, shorter lengths of stay, more outpatient care, and more home and community-based care. It also means patients may be more acutely ill during treatment by the cancer centre, and require more navigation and co-ordination across multiple care providers in different settings.
- New technologies and techniques are being used to treat more and more complex cancers. This will impact staff in different ways. For example, more technically-skilled staff will be needed to maintain new technologies; however, the use of mechanized techniques will replace manually-intensive labour (e.g., voice recognition software, rather than manual transcribers). Regardless of new opportunities, it is predicted that there will be a net loss in jobs as the result of healthcare technology.⁹
- Advanced information technologies are using web-based systems to gather information from and provide information to patients.¹⁰ These technologies are also enabling telehealth services, such as virtual consultations, teleradiology, telepathology and other remote services.
- Increasingly, multidisciplinary/interprofessional teams are providing integrated care. To meet the needs of patients effectively, teams must have the right number and types of professionals working to their maximum scope of practice and level of expertise. Team composition, development and training are required to provide this one-stop shop approach to patient care.
- There will be continued growth in advanced practice professionals, who provide direct patient care and perform technical roles. This will impact many of the traditional roles in cancer clinical service areas, as well as workflow, patient flow and the cost of care.
- The scope of practice of various health professionals will continue to evolve to meet the needs of increasingly complex and financially restricted healthcare systems. Related to this trend, healthcare tasks will increasingly shift from highly-trained healthcare workers to less highly-trained healthcare workers in order to maximize the efficient use of healthcare workforce resources.¹¹ For example, nurses will continue to take on care roles previously performed by physicians.

Key trends in HR management include the following:⁹

- Technologies will continue to have a profound effect on how HR offices collect, manage and communicate employee information.
- Employee training and development will continue to evolve and expand. Technology will continue to enable the use of multiple education methods, such as online learning, podcasts, teleseminars and webinars. This will increase access to continuing education opportunities.
- Given the significant changes in healthcare practice, organizations will need to increase their workplace education and development efforts. For various reasons, traditional education institutions lack the agility to respond quickly to the need for the different skills sets and knowledge that healthcare organizations require. Traditional educators may not be adequately preparing students to work in the constantly evolving cancer centre environment.
- A high-performing cancer centre depends on a high-performing workforce. An increasing emphasis on effectiveness, performance and accountability will challenge HR leadership to participate more actively in working with managers and staff to address performance issues.

D. REFERENCES

1. Fottler MD. Strategic human resource management. In: Fried BJ, Fottler MD, editor. Fundamentals of human resources in healthcare. Chicago: Health Administration Press; 2011.
2. Workload indicators of staffing needs: user's manual. World Health Organization; 2010.
3. High-Level Commission on Health Employment and Economic Growth. Working for health and growth: investing in the health workforce. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2016.
4. Required organizational practices handbook 2016. Accreditation Canada; 2005.
5. Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety. Hamilton, ON: Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety [cited 2017 January 5]. Available from: <http://www.ccohs.ca/>.
6. Developing an effective health care workforce planning model. American Hospital Association; 2013.
7. Jelfs E, Knapp M, Giepmans P, Wijga P. Creating good workplaces: retention strategies in health-care organizations. In: Buchan J WM, Glinos IA, Bremner J, editor. Health professional mobility in a changing Europe: new dynamics, mobile individuals and diverse responses, Volume II Copenhagen: The European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies and The World Health Organization; 2014.
8. Managing human resource information systems: risks and controls. Australian National Audit Office; 2013 [cited 2017 January 5]. Available from: <https://www.anao.gov.au/work/better-practice-guide/human-resource-management-information-systems-risks-and-controls>.
9. Envisioning tomorrow's healthcare workplace. American Society for Healthcare Human Resources Administration; 2013.
10. Santilli J, Vogenberg FR. Key strategic trends that impact healthcare decision-making and stakeholder roles in the new marketplace. American Health Drug Benefits. 2015;8(1):15-20.
11. Task shifting: global recommendations and guidelines. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2008

