



STRATHMORE UNIVERSITY

Strathmore Business School

Master of Business Administration Healthcare Management

END OF SEMESTER EXAMINATION

HCM 8110: MANAGEMENT COMMUNICATION & MEDIA RELATIONS IN HEALTHCARE ENVIRONMENT.

DATE: Thursday, 14th April 2016

Time: 3 hours

Instructions

Answer question **ONE** and **ANY OTHER TWO** questions

Question 1(30 Marks)

Read the article below and answer the questions that follow

Drug trial hospital crisis

By Ragnar Lofstedt, *The independent*, Saturday 8th April, 2006

Eight volunteers participated in a drug trial at Northwick Park hospital in north-west London on 13th March. Six suffered an adverse reaction to the bio-engineered protein drug TGN-1412, produced by TeGenero, a tiny German biotech firm. Thankfully, all are now making progress in their recovery.

A month on, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has concluded that the drug trial company, Parexel, was not at fault, yet it appears baffled as to the cause of the catastrophe.

Neither in-vitro nor animal tests can replace human tests. In this case, the volunteers were administered 0.2 per cent of the dose that was seen as toxic to laboratory animals - a very high safety margin - yet this still left two of the men critically ill. One of the possible explanations for these reactions is that the drug was designed to tackle a human protein - nothing else. Hence, in

cases such as this, where animal testing continues to provide valuable toxicity data, and indeed is required by law, the pace of innovation may actually demand new types of testing procedure.

At the same time, regulators, drug companies and hospitals have to become more proficient in communicating with the outside world. From a non-medical perspective, this case could have been handled much better. Early on, no one took charge. Rather, those involved quickly tried to distance themselves by stating either that they were simply following orders, or that the dose was correct, or that the drug had not produced any adverse reactions in animals. The impression was that they all wanted to plead not guilty.

The issue, however, is not clear-cut. Yes, there should be transparency, and of course the drug companies in question should co-operate fully with the regulators when information is demanded of them. Does this mean putting all the data on the internet and having all of us look at it?

If the drug companies agree to this, and if the public take the view that these experts can be trusted, then such a panel will suffice. Most of us do not have an interest in how exactly and why laboratory mice reacted to a certain test. And too much information can increase public anxiety with unintended consequences, such as patients giving up taking a drug.

What the TGN1412 case has shown is that healthcare institutions have to become better at communicating both the risks and the benefits of its work to the rest of us - and that there is a need for more involvement by independent experts in the regulatory process. If this does not happen, healthcare institutions will continue to lose public trust. And if this occurs, these same institutions, as we have seen in the past, will become more risk averse in order to regain credibility. Thereby they may deny patients life-saving treatments.

Required:

- a) Describe and exemplify three communication related shortcomings that make Northwick Park hospital most vulnerable to negative publicity. **(9 marks)**
- b) Justify four proactive ways in which the management at Northwick Hospital can improve their organizational intelligence to help them raise their levels of knowledge and awareness that they can use to strategically adapt to its environment or marketplace. **(8 Marks)**
- c) Formulate a strategy that applies four public relations tactics to help this institution cope with the negative publicity emanating from the drug trial saga. Describe those tactics in the order in which you would apply them. **(13 Marks)**

Question 2 (20 Marks)

- a) Modern day employment interviews are twofold: the employer interviews the candidate as the candidate interviews the organization. With an example from a healthcare institution in each case, describe three management communication related practices that employees look for in an organization that they are interested in working for. Examine the practice before,

during and after the interview.

(9 Marks)

- b) Using an organogram, demonstrate the place of the management communication function within an organizational structure. **(4 Marks)**
- c) Justify the location of the corporate communication function on an organogram. **(6 Marks)**

Question 3 (20 Marks)

- a) Don't hate the media, become the media. *Jello Biafra*

Required: In light of the statement above, and based on examples from articles and cases you have read in class, describe four benefits that a healthcare institution will derive from an active media relations policy. **(15 Marks)**

- b) An organization that frustrates diverts or blocks complaints will never learn how to do better, and it will gain a reputation for being hostile to its users. Frustrated complainants go off to tell dozens of their friends about just how badly they were treated, and word spreads fast. An organization that actively solicits users' views (and that does not just mean leaving forms lying around or routinely handing them out) will be positively perceived and appreciated.

Required: Explain five management communication practices that can help to handle complaints effectively among internal and external publics: **(5 Marks)**

Question 4 (20 Marks)

If you had to identify, in one word, the reason why the human race has not achieved, and never will achieve, its full potential, that word would be 'meetings'. *Dave Barry*

Required:

- a) In the context of a healthcare institution, discuss four main reasons why meetings are usually unproductive and in each case, explain what one should do to gain maximum benefit out of meetings. **(11 Marks)**
- b) Certain group tendencies make teams unproductive and create tensions. With the aid of relevant examples, analyze three such tendencies and in each case, explain how you can overcome the vagaries of counterproductive group tendencies. **(9 Marks)**

Question 5

(20 Marks)

Understanding constituents allows management to tailor communication tools specifically to a target market effectively. Although research before the use of digital tools and traditional media is rarely explored, an understanding of strategy for the choice of media channel for different constituents and messages could increase message reception.

Required

- a) Examine five characteristics of traditional media that you would explore before making a choice of channel to use. **(15 Marks)**
- b) Examine one theory of communication that explains the importance of the channel one chooses to communicate different messages to different constituents. Support your argument with two relevant examples **(5 Marks)**