

Establishing a Communication Framework in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic in a Tertiary Government Hospital in the Philippines

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Abstract : Emergency risk and health communications play a vital role in any pandemic response. However, the Philippine General Hospital (PGH) lacked a system of information delivery that could effectively fulfill the hospital's communication needs as a COVID-19 referral hospital. This study aimed to describe the establishment of a communication framework for information dissemination within a tertiary government hospital during the COVID-19 pandemic and evaluated the perceived usefulness of its outputs. This is a mixed quantitative-qualitative study with two phases. Phase 1 documented the formation and responsibilities of the Information Education Communication (IEC) Committee. Phase 2 evaluated its output and outcomes through a hospital-wide survey of 528 healthcare workers (HCWs) using a pre-tested questionnaire. In-depth explanations were obtained from five focused group discussions (FGD) amongst various HCW subgroups. Descriptive analysis was done using STATA 16 while qualitative data were synthesized thematically. Communication practices in PGH were loosely structured at the beginning of the pandemic until the establishment of the IEC Committee. The IEC Committee was well-represented by concerned stakeholders. Nine types of infographics tackled different aspects of the hospital's health operations after thorough inputs from concerned offices. Internal and external feedback mechanisms ensured accurate infographics. Majority of the survey respondents (98.67%) perceived these as useful in their work or daily lives. FGD participants cited the relevance of infographics to their occupations, suggested improvements, and hoped that these efforts would be continued in the future. Sustainability and comprehensive reach were the main concerns in this undertaking. The PGH COVID-19 IEC framework was developed through trial and testing as there were no existing formal structures to communicate health risks and to properly direct the HCWs in the chaotic time of a pandemic. It is a continuously evolving framework which is perceived as useful by HCWs and is hoped to be sustained in the future.

Keywords : COVID-19, pandemic, health communication, infographics, social media

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