

## **HOSPITAL VOLUNTEERING - the problem of defining tasks**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Volunteering is a way for individuals to express their identity and values (Wilson, 1999), with several nonprofit organizations (NPOs) now recognizing the importance of volunteer management (GV) and the positive impact of work can perform in organizations (Hotchkiss, Fottler, & Unruh, 2009; Koehnen & Santos, 2009).

Hospital volunteers have been present in the hospital context for a long time, where they have made an important contribution (Haski-Leventhal & Meijs, 2011), although the empirical evidence supporting this assertion is reduced (Hotchkiss et al., 2009). The benefits of using hospital volunteers are multiple, volunteering can be considered by hospitals as a source of human resources (HR) with skills and knowledge, which are low cost and must be managed in order to achieve the goals of organizations (Nogueira- Martins, Bersusa, & Siqueira, 2010). At the same time there is some discussion about the level of formalization appropriate to the role of the volunteers and consequently what tasks should be performed by the volunteers (Burbeck, Candy, Low, & Rees, 2014). Some claim that the formalization of the volunteer's activities is contrary to the values of the volunteer's function (Tõnurist & Surva, 2016), so formalizing can mean an increase in external control and therefore a reduction of the volunteer's inherent natural motivation. However, there appears to be evidence that a fragile and poorly allocated activity, as well as lack of information and reciprocity, contribute to the high disillusionment of volunteers (Edwards, 2005). In this context, we consider that the management of hospital volunteers (VH), particularly with regard to the functions and tasks performed and their relationships with other stakeholders, are important themes and little explored in the literature. Through an exploratory study, which incorporated the collection and analysis of qualitative data, involving 46 interviews with volunteers, employees and administration of three hospitals, we intend to answer the questions in question. As a result, we conclude that the definition of the function of the VH is generic, allows different interpretations and the tasks related to the function of the VH are not known to all stakeholders. This problem can also have negative repercussions regarding the relations between volunteers and health professionals, fomenting

possible situations of conflict. However, most interviewees are satisfied with the current format of volunteer management.

**Keywords:** Hospital volunteering; Tasks; Stakeholders; Management

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