



### Commentary

## UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT IN HEALTHCARE INDUSTRY: ARE THESE TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN?

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**ABSTRACT:** Leadership and management are distinct yet complementary forces essential for an effective healthcare system. While leadership involves setting a visionary path, inspiring teams, and motivating change through intuition and interpersonal influence, management focuses on the systematic organisation, coordination, and execution required to achieve specific goals. This article explores the differences between these two attributes, highlighting that a competent manager may not inherently be a strong leader, and vice versa. Effective healthcare delivery demands a blend of both skill sets: communication, delegation, and conflict resolution are integral to management, whereas vision and inspiration are the hallmarks of leadership. The article argues that for a healthcare system to function smoothly, leadership must initiate the process and define the direction, while management must facilitate the journey, ensuring targets are met through organised planning and evaluation. Ultimately, both are two sides of the same coin, interlinked and necessary for translating vision into tangible patient outcomes.

**KEYWORD:** Leadership; Management; Healthsector

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### INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a crucial component in the healthcare industry, ensuring that medical services are delivered effectively, patient outcomes are improved, and a positive working environment is maintained.<sup>1</sup> In contrast to leadership in other sectors, healthcare leadership requires a thorough understanding of clinical procedures and a genuine compassion for both patients and employees. To effectively balance the demands of patients, staff, and the organisation, healthcare leaders must possess strong strategic planning, decision-making, and communication skills.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, management in the healthcare industry involves effective resource organisation, coordination, and oversight to provide high-quality patient care. Planning, resource allocation, and funding are all essential to maintaining the efficient operation of healthcare facilities. Healthcare managers play a crucial role in enhancing operational effectiveness, leading healthcare teams, and implementing policies and procedures, thereby contributing to patient safety and quality improvement.<sup>3</sup>

Although leadership and management are closely interrelated, they remain two distinct attributes. Collectively, both form a framework of vital skills and abilities required for an individual to carry a team successfully towards a target.<sup>4</sup> However, on the other hand, a good manager may not be a good leader, and vice versa. Leadership

enables a person to define a path and motivates others to pursue that path. Whereas management is different, it enables the team to follow that path to achieve the ultimate goal.

#### Leadership vis-à-vis Management

There may be occasions when leadership is responsible for various aspects of management. Stelnicki *et al.* mentioned that effective nursing leadership plays a vital role in the management of nurses' mental health.<sup>5</sup> According to Turk W, most people agree that leadership and management are different from each other, but when they are asked to identify the key differences, they struggle to enumerate any. The reason is probably that they have an image in their mind but cannot express it in words. However, he notes a key distinction between a manager and a leader: a manager adheres to established policies and procedures, following textbook knowledge and techniques, whereas a leader follows their own intuition. In other words, leadership is responsible for setting the path, while management is responsible for driving it forward.<sup>6</sup> Ellis P and Abbott J consider a leader as someone followed by choice, but on the other hand, people have to obey the manager.<sup>7</sup> In crux, both are distant aspects but of the same coin.<sup>8</sup>

#### What is integral for effective management?

There are quite many things that are important and integral for effective team management.

Communication skills play a key and vital role in management. If a person communicates effectively with their team members, they can manage the team more effectively.<sup>8</sup> Sometimes, it becomes challenging to manage a team remotely, particularly when outsourcing projects and managing global virtual teams (GVTs), which can result in a virtual communication gap. To overcome this, I suggest that in-person management meetings should be scheduled mandatorily to interact with the team.

Delegation of tasks is another key component of effective management. Not everything can be done by a single person. A good manager is one who can utilise the strengths and weaknesses of their team members and delegates the right tasks to the right person. Problem-solving and troubleshooting are other key skills essential for managing a team. If one struggles with problem-solving or troubleshooting, it may be challenging to manage the team effectively. Similarly, conflict management is another crucial skill necessary for effective team management.<sup>8</sup>

#### **Are the two sides of the same coin?**

Now, this is a tricky question to answer, because there are many key ingredients common to both leadership and management, such as communication and interpersonal skills, mentoring, and delegation of assignments. However, as discussed earlier, there is a fine line between leadership and management. One person can be a good leader and a good manager simultaneously, but it is not always the case. A good leader may not possess good management skills, and similarly, a good manager may not prove to be a good leader. Leadership requires a visionary mindset, while management requires a systematic, well-organised approach to turn that vision into reality.<sup>9</sup>

#### **What can help in the smooth delivery of an effective healthcare system?**

Leadership inspires the team to initiate the process, while management facilitates it, ensuring the team meets their expected targets by evaluating their performance against pre-defined key performance indicators. Turk W quotes an interesting proverb in his article that “Managers do things right, while leaders do the right thing.”<sup>6</sup> Algahtani states that to ensure effective management, a person requires an aptitude for directing, building, and planning. However, to exercise effective leadership, a person requires an aptitude for motivating and inspiring others.<sup>10</sup>

#### **CONCLUSION**

Collectively, leadership and management are two distinct skill sets that share a few common traits. For effective team management in the healthcare

industry, both are essential for delivering the targeted patient-centred services successfully. In other words, they are interlinked and collectively lead towards a goal by two or more individuals, as it is tough to find a perfect leadership and management skill set in a single individual.

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