

06. RE-ORGANISING OUTPATIENT AND INPATIENT CARE TO IMPROVE PHYSICIAN-PATIENT RELATIONSHIP

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BACKGROUND:

The Cardiology-Angiology Practice (CAP) Heart Centre in Bremen, Germany was established in 1989. One of the largest private cardiovascular institutes in Germany, it offers services for the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of a variety of heart conditions. It has 22 board-certified cardiologists and angiologists.



Entrance to the Cardiology & Angiology Practice Heart Centre in Bremen.
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OBJECTIVES:

- Strengthen patient-physician relationship – to improve patient care
- Develop marketing – to promote cardiology and hospital location
- Secure future revenues – to invest in future services
- Improve recruitment and retention of hospital staff – to boost morale

METHODS:

The CAP focused on overcoming its main challenge, which was the discontinuous physician-patient relationship resulting from knowledge gaps, uncertainties and poor communication. Unnecessary delays in treatment seemed to be caused by patients staying too long in the care of their family doctor. Patients may be reluctant to consult specialists, due to high costs (fee per patient/contact), long distances to travel to see specialists or hospitals (>40 km), fear of long waiting times to consult specialists, and double X-ray examinations. The lack of suitable IT interfaces was identified as another factor contributing to delays.

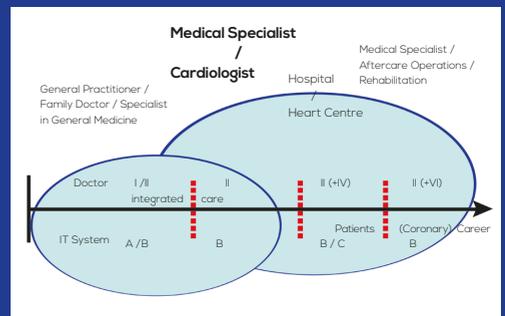
For many years, CAPs board-certified cardiologists and angiologists (currently 13) have worked as outpatient specialists as well as contractors for inpatient (invasive) services.

The main actions taken were to strengthen links between generalist and specialist physicians, and between outpatient and inpatient services. This was done by providing more relevant information to healthcare professionals and patients, as well as by developing more effective IT interfaces to support decision making.

RESULTS:

What has been achieved?

- ✓ Improved integration of inpatient-outpatient services, overcoming sector boundaries
- ✓ Improved physician-patient relationship, with increased mutual trust
- ✓ Fewer problems with IT interfaces, due to a single main IT system (MI/Compu Group) being linked to separate hospital information systems (SAP)
- ✓ More reliable medical information and patient education available
- ✓ Monitoring of 400,000 patients (in a region with 800,000 inhabitants)
- ✓ New platform for future development
- ✓ Opportunity to add nuclear medicine (scintigraphy), coronary computer tomography (CT), and magnetic resonance tomography (MRT)



New patient care chain and IT support system at CAP in Bremen.
 Source: Kardiologisch Angiologische Praxis Herzzentrum Bremen

TAKE-AWAYS:

What worked well?

- ✓ Identifying synergies to improve efficiency, especially in functional diagnostics and personnel
- ✓ Sharing existing expertise across functions to improve diagnosis
- ✓ Securing and expanding the range of services offered in cardiology (angiology, cardiac and vascular surgery)
- ✓ Improving marketing communication to raise awareness of cardiology and the hospital location
- ✓ Creating growth conditions for future private-public partnership, e.g. to establish a trendsetting, multisectoral heart centre with equal outpatient and inpatient services
- ✓ Broadening patient recruitment
- ✓ Improving staff recruitment strategies, training and research opportunities

