Managing change

This month AfPP showcases its 48th Congress and Exhibition ‘Managing Perioperative Care within Changing Environments’ at the ICC in Birmingham. This year has seen many changes in healthcare due to the global economic downturn and an increased need to produce quality and efficient services with limited resources. AfPP has also had to take cognisance of this and congress is now reduced to one day making it more cost effective and accessible to all perioperative practitioners.

Change is not always easy to accept and most of us will take a while to adapt to new ways of doing things. However for organisations to survive it is important to adapt and change to meet the needs of the new consumer.

Effective leadership requires individuals to work with others in teams and networks to deliver and improve services’ (NHS Leadership Academy 2011). Group or collaborative change is thought to be more effective and successful than individual change. A leadership style that encourages two-way communication and alternative opinions promotes engagement and collaborative working, essential aspects for successful change management. Although this collaborative approach is recognised as good practice some decisions cannot be debated and have to be introduced within an agreed time scale such as health policy and national guidelines.

With change in the health services occurring so rapidly often managers are sometimes forced to make quick decisions because of time pressures. These decisions are often rushed and taken without consultation or involvement of staff. Effectively managed change should be consultative and involve employee participation. Leadership that is directional and supportive is essential in time limited cases of change management; and while staff cannot negotiate change in this instance, providing staff with the reasons for change combined with a positive authentic leadership style can affect how staff respond and accept organisational change.

It is important that a leader acknowledges their leadership strengths and weaknesses to enable the best use of their qualities and appreciate personal knowledge gaps. It is equally important that a leader acknowledges the strengths and weaknesses of their staff and encourages and supports their development through change. Leaders who accredit their staff’s abilities can influence the level of empowerment and engagement an individual makes with the change process. Employees who are empowered through the management of change are often then less resistant and more creative in outlook.

Change is inevitable in any organisation and as members and practitioners in the perioperative field we can either embrace this or observe its unfolding from the sidelines.

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Reference