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## Konsolidacja zakładów opieki zdrowotnej na terenie Lublina

## Consolidation of healthcare centres (ZOZ) in the Lublin area

### Streszczenie

**Wstęp.** Trudna sytuacja w ochronie zdrowia wymaga ciągłej pracy nad możliwościami oddłużenia szpitali. Jedną z metod restrukturyzacji szpitali jest konsolidacja zakładów opieki zdrowotnej.

**Cel.** Celem pracy było przedstawienie poglądów pracowników administracyjnych szpitali, których organem założycielskim jest Urząd Marszałkowski w Lublinie, oraz losowo wybranych pacjentów na temat konsolidacji zakładów opieki zdrowotnej w Lublinie.

**Materiał i metody.** Zastosowano metodę sondażu diagnostycznego. Badaniem przy użyciu kwestionariusza ankiety zostało objętych 71 pracowników 4 szpitali w Lublinie podległych Urzędowi Marszałkowskiemu w Lublinie, oraz 103 pacjentów lubelskich szpitali.

**Wyniki.** Pracownicy administracyjni czterech szpitali marszałkowskich, w większości (56%) znają problematykę konsolidacji zakładów opieki zdrowotnej. Stosunek pracowników administracyjnych do konsolidacji ZOZ-ów jest w większości negatywny (66%). Pacjenci, jako strona odbierająca świadczenia medyczne w większości (84%), są niezadowoleni z obecnej sytuacji w ochronie zdrowia. Wśród zagrożeń jakie mogą wynikać z łączenia szpitali, pacjenci wyróżniają m.in. pogorszenie orientacji co do miejsca leczenia (49%) oraz dłuższe oczekiwanie na przyjęcie do szpitala (13%), a także do specjalisty (13%).

**Wnioski.** Pracownicy administracyjni, którzy w większości znają problematykę konsolidacji zakładów opieki zdrowotnej, nie są przychylnie nastawieni do tego typu restrukturyzacji z powodu możliwej utraty pracy, wynikającej z redukcji etatów administracyjnych w łączonych szpitalach. Pacjenci lubelskich szpitali, którzy w większości nie znają problematyki łączenia szpitali, przeważnie widzą pozytyw w konsolidacji ZOZ-ów. Wynika z tego, że pacjenci lubelskich szpitali patrzą z optymizmem na tego typu restrukturyzację, która może przynieść dla nich korzyści.

### Abstract

**Introduction.** The difficult situation in the healthcare requires continuous efforts focused on possibilities of reducing the debts of hospitals. A consolidation of healthcare centres is one of methods of hospitals restructuring.

**Aim.** The aim of this study was describing views of the administrative staff of hospitals, the founding body of which is Marshal Office in Lublin, and of randomly chosen patients on the consolidation of healthcare centres in Lublin.

**Material and methods.** The study use the diagnostic survey which was responded by a total of 71 employees of 4 hospitals subordinated to Marshal Office in Lublin, as well as by 103 patients of Lublin hospitals.

**Results.** The employees of 4 hospitals subordinated to Marshal Office in Lublin, are generally familiar (56%) with the problems of consolidation of ZOZ centres. The attitude of the administrative staff to the consolidation of ZOZ centres is largely negative (66%). Patients, the beneficiaries of medical services are largely (84%) dissatisfied with the current situation in the health care. Amongst threats which can result from the merger of hospitals, patients distinguish among others worsening of the sense of orientation as for the place of treatment (49%) and longer waiting for admission to the hospital (13%), as well as to the specialist (13%).

**Conclusions.** The administrative staff who largely know issues of the consolidation of healthcare centres, are not in favour of the restructuring of this type because of possible job loss, resulting from administrative staff reductions at merged hospitals. Patients of Lublin hospitals, who largely don't know issues of the merger of hospitals, can mainly see positives in the consolidation of healthcare centres (ZOZ). It follows that patients of Lublin hospitals look forward with optimism at restructuring of this type, which can surely be beneficial for them.

**Słowa kluczowe:** konsolidacja, zakłady opieki zdrowotnej, zarządzanie, restrukturyzacja.

**Key words:** consolidation, healthcare centres (ZOZ), management, restructuring.

## INTRODUCTION

The difficult situation in the healthcare requires continuous efforts focused on possibilities of reducing the debts of hospitals. A consolidation of healthcare centres is one of the methods of restructuring of hospitals. Over the course of time, with the technological progress providing the best methods of diagnostics and treatment, costs are increasing and certain degree of the failure of the hospital service system may be observed. This difficult situation is forcing health care organizers into discussion and stimulation of changes and transforming of the model of the hospital service. A consolidation is one of ways of organizational evolution of hospitals. The idea of the consolidation hasn't been outdated and is still worth considering.

The aim of this publication is presentation of the methods of risk management and the possibilities of their implementation in health care centers in Poland. Consolidation of healthcare centres (ZOZ) in the Lublin area – advantages and disadvantages.

The advantages of consolidation:

- consolidation of individual centres,
- adapting the structure existing in the provincial hospitals to the real level of needs,
- cooperation of merged units in the organizational, economic and medical scope,
- optimization of investments,
- limiting administration and incurred costs associated with it,
- more efficient management, greater mobility of the staff,
- cohesion of computer systems of joined individual system (medical economic-financial, managing),
- implementing of the centralized purchases (medicines, equipment) - financial economizing,
- increasing the bargaining position with suppliers and creditors which will result in minimum prices to materials, medicines, equipment etc.
- possibility of the effective asset utilization; the market of unnecessary assets for investment targets and the regulation of obligations,
- effective use of material resources (apparatus) and personal resources,
- increasing the bargaining position with National Health Fund.

Disadvantages of the consolidation:

- resistance of the senior staff of merged centres, anxiety about the loss of current privileges, positions, lack of a sense of stability,
- danger of the non-acceptance of the part of employees (permanent element of every change),
- need to place allocated administrative employees, payment of check-ins to persons who will not be accepted by the new entity,
- costs of consolidation.

Healthcare centres take the key position in the Polish system of the healthcare. Their correct functioning determines health safety of citizens [1]. The situation of Polish public hospitals, which are an extremely important link in the system, isn't good both in terms of financing as well as the organizational structure.

Self-contained public healthcare centres which, through statutory restrictions and insufficient agreements with the monopolist – the National Health Fund, are typical forms of the healthcare centres running up more debts every year. The managers of Polish hospitals are trying to improve the situation in different ways. Wanting to improve the financial result of hospitals managers apply a number of methods, starting, with the commercialization, the privatization with improvement programs, ending with the consolidation of branches or the entire institutions. Consolidation may cause an extension of the offer and creating of new wards which are not present in a given area [2].

Consolidation of healthcare centres is regulated by Chapter 2, section 2 (public healthcare centres) of the Act of 30 August 1991 concerning healthcare centres.

The discussed Act is regulating the possibility of the merging/consolidation of self-contained public healthcare centres which can be realized by:

1. transferring the entire possession of the at least one self-contained public healthcare centre (being taken over) to other independent public healthcare centre (heartbreaking);
2. creating new independent public healthcare centre arising from at least two merged independent public healthcare centres [3].

The first one consists in taking over one centre SP ZOZ (taking over) by the other centre SP ZOZ. So it is - applying the terminology in the Code of Commercial Partnerships and Companies - consolidation by taking over (taking over merging). In this case the Health Care Centre taking over another SP ZOZ centre is keeping its current independent legal status, however the one being taken over is losing its status. The regulation commented here clearly shows that it is connected with transferring the possession of entirely taken over SP ZOZ by another SP ZOZ. According to the Article 44 of Civil Code a property and other property rights are possessions [4].

The second possibility is merging of SP ZOZ centres through establishing of the new SP ZOZ centre. In this case in place of the merged SP ZOZ centres which lose the independent legal existence, there come into existence a new entity (SP ZOZ centre). However it is created on the basis of possessions of the merged SP ZOZ centres, and takes over their employees and objectives, as well as it enters into all legal relationships of the former SP ZOZ centres, irrespective of the legal nature of these relationships. The commented Act clearly points out that under this procedure at least two SP ZOZ centres are taken into account, but it also can concern a higher numbers. It is worthwhile in this context to underline it that at both modes of the SP ZOZ centres merges, the entity which is created, can deprive these Health Care Centres of allotted or purchased possessions [1].

## AIM

The aim of the study was presenting the opinion of the administrative staff of “Marshal Office-subordinated hospitals”, and of patients concerned on the consolidation of healthcare centres in Lublin.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

In this study a method of the diagnostic survey was applied, and the technique is a questionnaire form. Seventy one employees of 4 hospitals subordinated to Marshal Office in Lublin became study subjects to answer the questionnaire form. The following hospitals were included: SP Provincial Hospital of Jan Boży in Lublin, Regional Railway SP Hospital in Lublin, Prof. M. Kaczyński Neuropsychiatric SP Hospital in Lublin, Cardinal Wyszyński Provincial Specialist Hospital in Lublin. Also 103 patients of the Lublin hospitals were participating in the study. The study was conducted from August 2008 to January 2010. The study was anonymous and conducted by authors of this research paper.

## RESULTS

The employees of 4 hospitals subordinated to Marshal Office in Lublin, are generally familiar with the problems of consolidation of ZOZ centres.

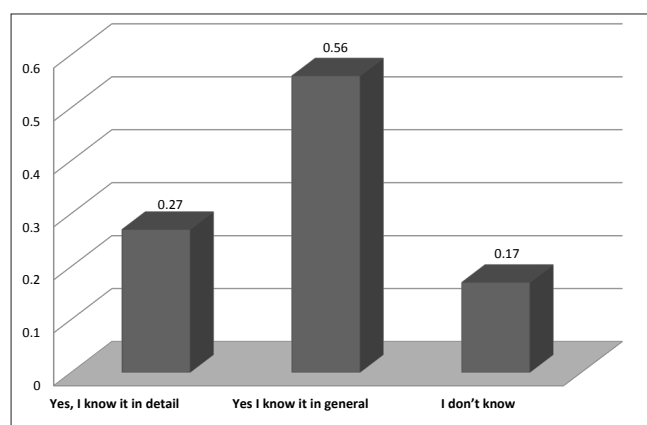


FIGURE 1. Self-evaluation of the knowledge of administrative staff on the subject of consolidation of ZOZ centres (%).

Similar number of administrative staff think that consolidation will bring more positives than negatives (42%), and 40% expect more negatives than positives as the result of the consolidation process. Such a distribution of the opinions may testify to an absence of the concrete knowledge as for such a kind of restructuring.

Among the positives of consolidation of ZOZ centres, the subjects mentioned among others:

1. full use of medical equipment,
2. better access to medical services,
3. lower number of administration workers,
4. better economy with patient beds.

Among the negatives of consolidation of ZOZ centres, the subjects mentioned among others:

1. reduction of administrative and medical positions
2. too high diversity to manage.

As the result of the study, it is possible to notice that respondents largely mentioned the administration staff reduction as the positive; however in negatives they largely emphasized the staff reduction as a negative.

It is possible to conclude that the administrative staff realizes their numerical excess but the loss of work is an undoubted disadvantage of such a restructuring. The attitude of the administrative staff to the consolidation of ZOZ centres

is largely negative (66%), which results from the fear of job losses.

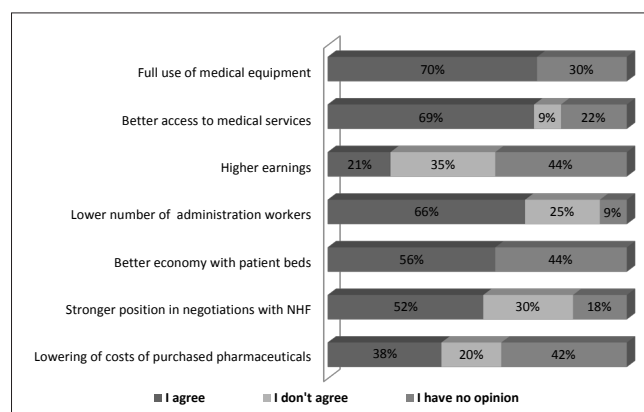


FIGURE 2. The opinions of administrative staff on the positives of consolidation of ZOZ centres (%).

Consolidation of large hospitals subordinated to Marshal Office can be connected with a heavy responsibility and large expenses. Over half of the administrative staff (56%) think that the founding body should be burdened with such a responsibility; however 17% think that the external company specializing in the organization of the healthcare can perform such a role. Almost everyone examined (94%) thinks that the consolidation will influence the staff reduction.

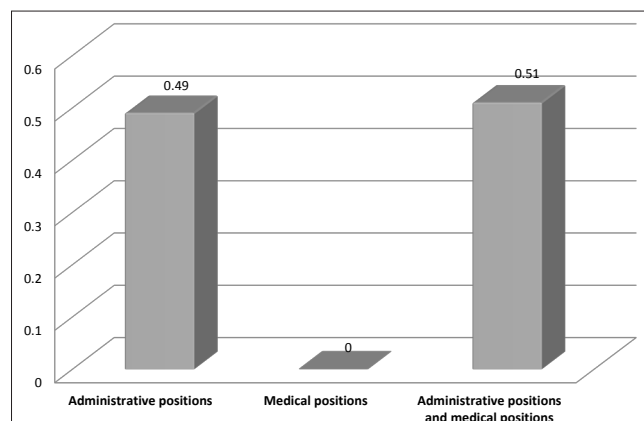


FIGURE 3. Foreseen reduction of positions after ZOZ centres consolidation in specific human workforce areas (%).

Theoretical principles of the consolidation are familiar to the majority of respondents, however scarcely a 14% of respondents present the working knowledge on consolidation. The situation of the lack of knowledge about the consolidation of hospitals, also contributes to the dislike of employees to such a restructuring. Over half examined (55%) know no example of the consolidation of hospitals, however amongst persons who know examples of the consolidation (45%), every third one is assessing the effect of the consolidation as positive, and scarcely 4% of them are assessing the effect as without the great significance.

The administrative staff are an undoubtedly significant employee group on which the successful restructuring of hospitals will largely depend. Consolidation of hospitals having a lot of positives isn't perceived positively by employees, especially by administrative staff. Mainly due to administrative staff reductions and threat of loss the work, employees aren't in favour of the consolidation of hospitals.

In the questionnaire form directed to patients, men constituted the 47%, and 53% were women. The questionnaire form was filled by 66% of persons with the higher education, 29% of persons with the secondary education and 5% of persons with the primary education. Participating persons in the study were most often in the age of 20-34 (61%), 23% – at the age of 35-45 and the minority was individuals at 46-60 (16%).

Patients, as the party receiving medical benefits are largely (84%) dissatisfied with the current situation in the health care. Only every tenth respondent is pleased with the current situation in the health care. Amongst the persons pleased with the health care it is possible to distinguish: the opinions concerned with: nice professional service (7%), best quality of provided services (3%). The dissatisfied with the health care, as the cause of their dissatisfaction indicate, among others, the long waiting time to the specialist (54%), long admitting time to hospital (11%) and unpleasant service (17%). Majority (58%) of respondents are familiar with consolidation, however as many as 64% don't know what exactly the consolidation of healthcare centres consists in.

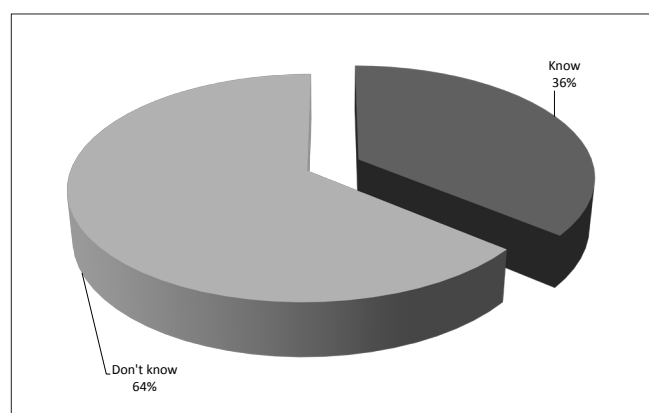


FIGURE 4. The knowledge of the idea of consolidation of ZOX centres in patients' opinion (%).

As the result of the conducted study one can say about people's confidence towards such solutions.

Amongst threats which can result from the merging of hospitals, patients distinguish among others worsening of the sense of orientation as for the place of treatment (49%) and long waiting for admission to the hospital (13%), as well as to the specialist (13%). One should pay attention to the fact that only a 2% of respondents think that a threat resulting from the consolidation will be worsening of qualities of services. Amongst positives of the consolidation the respondents distinguish among others better quality of provided services (36%) and shorter waiting time of admitting to hospital (31%) and to the specialist (31%).

As Adam Ugrewicz is explaining it, an attorney of the Board of the Dolnośląski Province for the restructuring of the Health Service - the consolidation of hospitals is simply providing straight economical profits – reduction in administration and the auxiliary staff: one bookkeeping, one kitchen, one laboratory, one X-ray studio and so on. But it is not everything. If there are 3 surgical wards at a few hospitals being in the low distance from each other and none of them is exploiting it abilities in 100 per cent, because this area doesn't simply have this many patients, it seems definitely

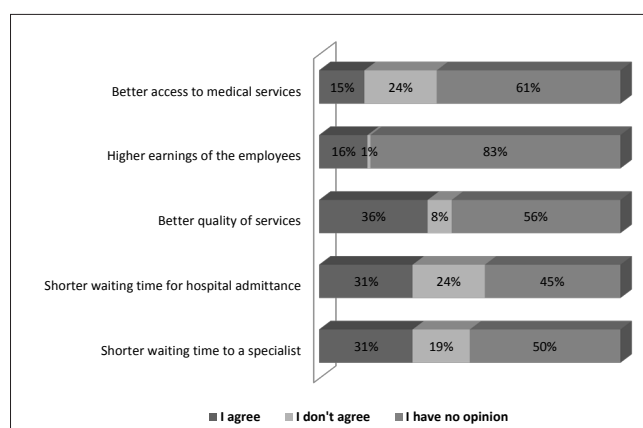


FIGURE 5. The opinion of patients of Lublin hospitals as for the positives of consolidation of ZOX centres in Lublin (%).

a better option to create one, smaller, but profitable surgery, and in place remaining to create wards of other specialties, such which will also be needed here. In this way the hospital will be able to offer more services for the same money and won't be generating losses [5].

And as Krzysztof Tuczapski vice-chairman of the National Association of Non-public Self-government Hospitals puts it: According to some trade union representatives, such structure will have a brand of the monopolist, and apart from possible savings, the consolidation will cause the risk of the bureaucratization and the ineffective management. In big urbanized areas consolidation of hospitals, of which a city or a marshal of the province are the founding body, can work, but only in case of specialist multiprofile units [5].

Also Lublin regional civil servants debated the idea of merging Lublin hospitals. With opinion of Arkadiusz Bratkowski, the member of the management board of the Lublin province responsible for the Health Service, lots of problems are generated by Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński Provincial Hospital. To him, a consolidation with the Railway Hospital and Jan Boży Hospital was supposed to be a rescue for them. It was supposed to be a medicine for the improvement in the awful financial standing of these three institutions. After the merging of these hospitals they could together put big supplies of medicines out to tender which would allow getting lower prices, even by 25 per cent. Also an administration department would become smaller [6]. The merger could also facilitate the development of chosen scopes at the simultaneous improvement of the quality of the treatment, the management and the possibility of generating the savings [7]. Every good or the rare service is considered to be economic good; therefore the health care is an economic good too [8].

## CONCLUSIONS

1. Over half (56%) of the studied administrative staff, are familiar with what the consolidation of healthcare centres consists in. Every fourth individual knows about principles of the consolidation of healthcare centres, however as many as the 17% of employees don't have enough knowledge in this issue which is a bad prognosis for simple conducting of the correct restructuring. And so taking the subject of consolidation in healthcare one should at first deliver the knowledge of changes principles and mecha-



nisms implemented to people and only later put them into practice.

2. In large majority - in as much as 66% - the examined administrative staff aren't favourably predisposed towards a consolidation of healthcare centres which can be caused by the threat of the staff reduction concerning this employee group. Almost all respondents are expecting such a reduction.
3. The evaluation if the consolidation of healthcare centres will bring more positives or more negatives is shared by similar quantitative group of the administrative staff. Their passive attitude to the process of the consolidation can result from it.
4. Over half (64%) of responding patients are not familiar with issues of the consolidation of healthcare centres, whereas the ones who seem to have met with the subject matter of the consolidation of healthcare centres, largely (70%) expect general beneficial changes.
5. Almost every third patient of Lublin hospitals, after the consolidation of healthcare centres is expecting the improvement of the quality of provided services, of shorter waiting time to the specialist, but almost the half of respondents aren't sure whether the consolidation of healthcare centres will cause a positive effect on the improvement of the quality of provided services. Such an opinion can result from lack of information provided to the society about the restructuring through the consolidation.

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