

## Original Research Article

# An Assessment of Case Manager Experience on the Implementation of Case Management at Langsa City General Hospitals

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**Abstract: Background:** The responsibility of case managers is to facilitate and coordinate patient care. Their presence in the implementation of case management is expected to have a beneficial impact. The program is also expected to benefit the hospital in a variety of ways, specifically in terms of patient service management related to more cost-effective services. **Objective:** This research aims to explore the experience of case managers in carrying out case management at Langsa City General Hospital (RSUD), which has been operational since June 2019. **Methods:** This research adopted a qualitative design with a descriptive phenomenological approach. From a total of seven individuals on duty, five case managers from the nursing profession were included in the population. The remaining two are medical professionals and refused to participate. Data were collected by conducting interviews, observations, and documentation. **Results:** The results showed that case managers are still in the honeymoon phase, with their services focused on the collaboration gap and overlapping roles. **Conclusion:** Almost all case managers feel that their work experience has not been fully implemented in accordance with the work program. They have to adapt to new tasks and receive some training related to the implementation of case management in hospitals.

**Keywords:** Case manager, case management, and case manager experience.

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## BACKGROUND

Patient care service is a complex process involving various health professions including nurses, doctors, pharmacists, nutrition, and administrative personnel (Lancaster, 2014). The case management method is a form of health care that is considered accountable for improving the service quality. This method has been proven to be a solution, specifically in saving maintenance costs (Joo & Huber, 2014). The implementation of case management in long-term hospitalization reduces and controls the increase in medical costs (Oh & Oh (2017).

The Indonesian Hospital Accreditation Commission (KARS) since 2012 through hospital accreditation standards uses the term "Patient Service Manager" to promote the development of case management services. Case managers come from a variety of academic backgrounds, including social workers, psychologists, and nurses. In practice, they act

as health educators, counselors, advocates, mentors, researchers, and administrators (Joo & Huber, 2014).

Nurse case managers are front-line professionals that interact in real-world settings as service providers and recipients of medical assistance programs (Oh & Oh, 2017). According to several research, case management was applied in Indonesian hospitals, such as in West, East, and Central Java, as well as other provinces (Sunaringtyas & Sulisno (2015). The case manager program in Aceh province was also applied in Dr. Zainoel Abidin and Meuraxa Hospital in Banda Aceh City. This was carried out with the implementation of standard case management in the inpatient room of Dr. Zainoel Abidin Hospital with a 95.2% (Noviasari & Kamil 2016).

The role of case managers is highly needed in optimizing integrated patient care as well as to improve interprofessional collaboration, facilitating the fulfillment of patient care needs, including their families and caregivers. Therefore, this research aims to

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explore experiences in the implementation of case management by case managers at Langsa City General Hospital (RSUD).

## METHOD

This research adopted a qualitative design with a phenomenological approach focusing on the experience from the informant's point of view (Polit & Beck, 2014). Ethical approval was obtained from the Nursing Research Ethics Commission (KEPK) of the Faculty of Nursing, Syiah Kuala University. The ethical clearance letter was obtained on July 28, 2020, with the number B/1949/UN11.1.12/DL/2020. Furthermore, permission for data collection was obtained from the director of RSUD Langsa City.

### 1. Information Source

The total informants used were five case managers. The inclusion criteria include those with three years of experience as professional caregivers, a minimum education level of nurses for the nursing profession, and a bachelor for other professions.

### 2. Data Collection

Data were collected using in-depth interviews conducted by Fazrina at RSUD Langsa City.

After obtaining permission from the education and training party, information was provided to the facilitator concerning the criteria for the desired candidate, namely all case managers in the hospital, both from the medical and nursing professions. Furthermore, an explicit explanation was given to informants that the ongoing discussion would be recorded from start to finish to enable documentation for analysis after the interview.

### 3. Data Analysis

Content analysis technique is used to obtain an objective, systematic, and sociologically relevant description of mass communication messages using quantitative or qualitative procedures or a combination of both (Ritonga, 2004).

## RESULT

### 1. Demographic Data

Almost all of the current case managers are former heads of rooms in their previous positions. The data on the informant characteristics included age, gender, occupation, religion, ethnicity, education, and address. The characteristics are shown in the table below:

No.	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1.	<b>Informant Age</b>		
	43	1	20
	47	1	20
	51	2	40
2.	<b>Gender</b>		
	Male	2	40
3.	<b>Ethnic group</b>		
	Aceh	5	100
4.	<b>Education</b>		
	Master of Nursing	2	40
5.	<b>Occupation</b>		
	Nurse	5	100

### 2. The Theme of Research Analysis Results

The categories of themes identified are shown from the following explanations:

#### Theme 1: The Honeymoon Phase

According to this theme, the task of case managers has no significant difference from their as professional care providers (PPA), which required direct interaction with patients. However, the communication they have to foster is more intense than when they were PPA. Since case managers' recruitment is confined to selecting from available resources, then they are still in the honeymoon phase. Furthermore, a formal written test is not required or used as criteria in selecting a case manager.

These are some statements from informants:

*"There were no selections, they were immediately appointed. Because there are conditions right? Probably because, I have been the head of the room, at least a nurse and have several years of work experience."*(i-2)

*"There is no written selection. They saw this while I was working. After looking around, I realize that there are some conditions here that fulfill my criteria."*(i-4)

#### Theme 2: Focus of Service: Patients

This theme explains that case managers have important role in managing various patient needs from different cases. Informants agreed that in carrying out

case management based on clinical pathways, they provide services that are in accordance with the patient's needs regardless of the differences in the background of their status. Therefore, the length of stay (LOS) rate in the investigated hospital is decreasing. This is clear from statements submitted by several case managers.

*"Yes, the case management is how we manage a case, but the case here is in terms of service, therefore, the standard is that everyone receives the same."(i-1)*

*"Dozens of patients are being managed. They are then screened later to determine which is to be managed."(i-2)*

*"Hence, we will sit down to arrange this clinical pathway. To arrange this, there is a nurse and a doctor in each of those fields, to determine whether this clinical pathway case can be included or not." (i-5)*

*"Hence, currently, there is no longer LOS, it is lengthening."(i-1)*

### **Theme-3: Collaboration Gap**

Informants revealed that they only discussed each other with other professional case managers. Several medical peers and colleagues still believe that their performance is being intervened and monitored by the presence of case managers. They only hold non-formal meetings between case managers with monthly reports used as documentary evidence that they have carried out case management.

This is illustrated in the following expression:

*"There was no formal meeting. However, we immediately met and told the PPA that the treatment period was already over, we need to find a solution together."(i-1)*

*"..the point is, if the case manager is a nurse, please report it to the nursing department. If the case manager is a doctor, it means reporting it to the medical service sector." (i-2)*

### **Theme-4: Overlapping Roles**

The overlapping of tasks means that there is still case managers who play a dual role as the head of an outpatient clinic. The occurrence of authority misunderstanding and the lack of training on case management implementation are obstacles for case managers in carrying out their duties. As stated by informants:

*"They think this case manager is the head of the room, but it is not."(i-2)*

*"But what is running now seems as if the clinical pathway is our job. That is actually what fills in care providers, doctors, nurses, filled with ticks."(i-2)*

*"There are still 7 trainings that must be there."(i-3)*

## **DISCUSSION**

There are still many case managers in results-oriented work areas, particularly at the management level that focuses on gains rather than the strategies and processes utilized to accomplish the result (Robbins, 2014). Meanwhile, case managers are required to have special competence and expertise in building good working relationships, such as the ability to coordinate and collaborate, in order to achieve good service quality for patients.

According to Delaney (2018), the care services received by patients are a complex process because it involves various health professions ranging from nurses, doctors, pharmacists, nutritionists, as well as hospital administration staff (Fitri & Sundari, 2018). Although the essence is different, they both have the same goal when it comes to case management (Narasimhan *et al.*, 2015). In working together, case managers must be able to play an active role as a liaison between patients and doctors, as well as other health workers to produce quality services based on patient center care services (Leonard, 2015).

Case management is applied to patients with chronic conditions to improve access, communication, coordination, and involvement in better health care decision-making (Indrian, 2018). A clinical pathway is a form of guidelines is used as a tool to guarantee and improve the quality of the clinical care process (Fitri & Sundari, 2018). Personnel who deal with case management are known as case managers.

Nurses who are appointed as case managers are yet to carry out their roles and functions because some of those who previously served as head of the room are still familiar with their duties and positions. Consequently, the implementation of roles and functions is overlapping. According to informants, the head of the outpatient polyclinic is no longer there, thus, the task is now being taken over by outpatient case managers. The influencing factors include case managers' competence (Alfjri *et al.*, 2018). KARS (2016), reported that both nurses and doctors need to attend training to improve knowledge related to the preparation and implementation of Operational Service Standards which consist of clinical practice guidelines and pathways (Yamazaki & Umemoto, 2014).

## **CONCLUSION**

Conclusively, almost all case managers have the same experience while on duty. They need training related to the implementation of case management in carrying out their roles and functions.

The management of RSUD Langsa City is expected to improve the quality of case manager competencies by compiling continuing education programs, both in-house training and coaching to

increase their knowledge in playing their roles and functions in accordance with the accreditation demands.

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