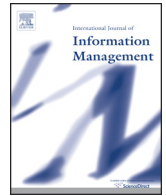




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## Case study

# A learning organization in the service of knowledge management among nurses: A case study



Marie-Pierre Gagnon<sup>a,b,\*</sup>, Julie Payne-Gagnon<sup>b</sup>, Jean-Paul Fortin<sup>c</sup>, Guy Paré<sup>d</sup>, José Côté<sup>e,f</sup>, François Courcy<sup>g</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Faculty of Nursing Science, Université Laval, 1050 avenue de la Médecine, Quebec City, Canada

<sup>b</sup> CHU de Québec Research Center, 10 rue de l'Espinay, Quebec City G1L 3L5, Canada

<sup>c</sup> CSSS de la Vieille-Capitale, 880 Père-Marquette, Quebec City G1S 2A4, Canada

<sup>d</sup> Department of Information Technology Management, HEC Montréal, 3000 chemin de la Côte-Sainte-Catherine, Montreal H3T 2A7, Canada

<sup>e</sup> Faculty of Nursing Science, Université de Montréal, 2375 chemin de la Côte-Ste-Catherine, Montreal H3T 1A8, Canada

<sup>f</sup> CHUM Research Center, 850 rue St-Denis, Montreal H2X 0A9, Canada

<sup>g</sup> Department of Psychology, Université de Sherbrooke, 2500 boulevard de l'Université, Sherbrooke J1K 2R1, Canada

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## ABSTRACT

It becomes critical for health care organizations to develop strategies that aim to design new work practices and to manage knowledge. The introduction of learning organizations is seen as a promising choice for better knowledge management and continuing professional development in health care. This study analyzes the effects of a learning organization on nurses' continuing professional development, knowledge management, and retention in a health and social services centre in Quebec, Canada. The learning organization seemed to affect daily nursing work in a positive manner, despite its variable impact on other professionals and other sites outside the hospital centre. These changes were particularly pronounced with respect to knowledge transfer, support for nursing practices, and quality of health care, objectives that the learning organization had sought to meet since its inception. However, it seemed to have a limited effect on nurse retention.

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## 1. Introduction

Today's society emerged as a result of a transformation from an industrial era to a knowledge era, leaving room for the creation, collection, and use of knowledge (Johannessen & Olsen, 2010). As highly knowledge intensive institutions requiring continuous education in order to improve their potential (Tsai, 2014), health care institutions have seen their knowledge capital increase in importance with the transformation of society (Estrada, 2009; Tsai, 2014). Health care professionals are also in need of knowledge since their practice requires lifelong learning in order to improve their competencies and provide effective and quality care for their patients (Tsai, 2014).

On the other hand, health care institutions are also facing important challenges in the area of knowledge management. Managing knowledge in health care organizations is complex since they are multi-level and multi-site networks with central management, but also strong local organizations (French et al., 2009). Also, the sheer amount and fragmentation of information, rapid expansion of knowledge, and context dependency make it impossible for a person to access all the available knowledge in this domain (Estrada, 2009; French et al., 2009). Additionally, the health care sector is experiencing a widespread nursing shortage in many developed and developing countries around the globe (Buchan & Aiken, 2008; Littlejohn, Campbell, & Collins-McNeil, 2012), and faces an ageing population (World Health Organization, 2010). An important loss of knowledge capital is attributed to the retirement of experienced and knowledgeable nurses across the institutions (Clauson, Wejr, Frost, McRae, & Straight, 2011). This situation is alarming due to the possible consequences that they may have on health care professionals practice as well as access, security, and quality of health care (Clauson et al., 2011; Estrada, 2009).

In this context, it is critical for health care organizations to look for innovative solutions, as well as to develop strategies that aim to design new work practices and to manage knowledge. Among the

\* Corresponding author at: Faculty of Nursing Science, Université Laval, 1050 avenue de la Médecine, Quebec City, Canada. Tel.: +1 4185254444x53169; fax: +1 4185254194.

E-mail addresses: [marie-pierre.gagnon@fsi.ulaval.ca](mailto:marie-pierre.gagnon@fsi.ulaval.ca) (M.-P. Gagnon), [julie.payne-gagnon@crchudequebec.ulaval.ca](mailto:julie.payne-gagnon@crchudequebec.ulaval.ca) (J. Payne-Gagnon), [jean-paul.fortin@fmed.ulaval.ca](mailto:jean-paul.fortin@fmed.ulaval.ca) (J.-P. Fortin), [guy.pare@hec.ca](mailto:guy.pare@hec.ca) (G. Paré), [jose.cote@umontreal.ca](mailto:jose.cote@umontreal.ca) (J. Côté), [francois.courcy@usherbrooke.ca](mailto:francois.courcy@usherbrooke.ca) (F. Courcy).