

CHALLENGES IN THE MANAGEMENT OF A COMPLEX HOSPITAL IN ROMANIA



Interview with Prof. Anca COLIȚĂ , manager of Fundeni Clinical Institute

Primary care physician in hematology and pediatric oncology

Pediatric hemato-oncology superspecialization (2000)

Bone marrow transplantation superspecialization (2004)

Head of Pediatrics 2 Department, Fundeni Clinical Institute (2011-2019)

University professor, Pediatrics discipline, Pediatrics department, "Carol Davila" UMPH, Bucharest, Fundeni Clinical Institute, Bucharest

Head of Pediatrics discipline, Department 7, Fundeni Clinical Institute

Member of the Professors Council of "Carol Davila" UMPH (2016 – present)

Member of the "Carol Davila" UMPH Senate (2020 – present)

Doctor of medicine (PhD) – hemato-oncology (June 2003)

Postdoctoral researcher in the "Supporting postdoctoral research in the field of reconstructive transplant surgery" project (POSTDOC TRANSPLANT)

Representative of Fundeni Clinical Institute in the European Reference Network (ERN)

Principal investigator in numerous clinical trials

Vice-president of the Romanian Society of Pediatric Onco-Hematology (2018)

Vice-president of the Romanian Society of Bone Marrow Transplantation (2017)

Member of the Management Committee of the Romanian Society of Hematology

Member of the Romanian Society of Hemostasis and Thrombosis

Member of the European Blood and Marrow Transplantation (EBMT)

Member of the European Hematology Association (EHA)

Member of the International Society of Pediatric Oncology (SIOP)

Member of the Romanian Pediatric Society

Vice-president of the pediatric hematology-oncology Commission of the Ministry of Health

Coordinator of the pediatric bone marrow transplant program in Fundeni Clinical Institute

Member of the CNAS Commission for the approval of specific medical investigations (PET-CT)

Member of doctoral committees

Reporter: Dear Mrs. Doctor, you are the manager of a complex hospital, which is recognized as one of the reference centers from our country.

– What challenges do the management of such a hospital, with a complex activity and with so many medical disciplines represented in existing departments, involve, from the point of view of organizing, planning, coordinating, managing and controlling the activity?

Anca COLIȚĂ :On a general level, medical activity, in all its complexity, represents a challenge, and when a very wide range of medical specialties come together under a single dome, such as those found in the Fundeni Clinical Institute, the idea of a challenge can be considered somewhat obsolete through the daily routine or, in other words, it is a constant way of working, a natural condition of the environment in which you carry out your current activity. As a large medical and university center, with clinical, educational and medical scientific research activity, the Fundeni Clinical Institute represents a permanent challenge in itself.

But in a string of enumerations, over the past three years, the first position was held by the COVID-19 pandemic, which involved a long series of unknowns that we had to face and rapidly implement new and effective solutions for to overcome any risk of blocking the activity. From the creation of special circuits to the re-training of medical and auxiliary personnel and to the purchase, in a crisis, of special materials and equipment for the pandemic (protective suits, disinfectants, glasses, medical robes, protective masks and gloves, air purification devices etc.), continuing with the reconfiguration of the budget and other programs and projects to support the general activity during the pandemic crisis, everything was a challenge to which we reacted with a very united team.

– What obstacles do you think should be overcome to achieve the expected results?

AC: If you manage to overcome yourself, as often as possible, then any obstacle will be much easier to overcome, and in medicine, the main opportunity is given by the systematic process called continuing medical education. At the Fundeni Clinical Institute, I have the privilege that, as a manager, but also as a doctor, I have real teams of professionals by my side, both from a medical and administrative point of view. As in any health facility, the main concern is the patient, who, regardless of the severity of the condition, must benefit from excellent medical services, in safe and comfortable conditions.



In order to optimize the clinical, educational and medical scientific research activity of the Fundeni Clinical Institute, we have managed in recent years to develop and implement sustainable projects and programs, through which we can keep on the same trajectory of academic performance.

I can list here two big projects carried out through the Large Infrastructure Operational Program (POIM in Romanian) and financed from the European Social Fund - "Timely and efficient management by the Fundeni Clinical Institute of the COVID-19 health crisis" and "Increasing the capacity of the «Prof. Dr. C.C. Iliescu» Emergency Institute for Cardiovascular Diseases and the Fundeni Clinical Institute for the management of the health crisis COVID-19". Also, through the Human Capital Operational Program (POCU in Romanian), we developed and implemented a series of other extremely important investment projects, among which I remember one of the large national colorectal screening programs – ROCASS II.

At the same time, we are faced with the insufficiency of TESA staff, the qualified human resource in this technical, economic and socio-administrative platform being imperatively necessary especially for the running of European programs in optimal conditions.

The most important challenge at the moment is the aging infrastructure of the Institute. In this sense, we have started an extensive project to relocate the entire activity in a new building that will also be developed here, on the Fundeni platform, and I am convinced that we will have the support of all the decision-making factors for this project to become a reality as soon as possible shortly.

R: The hospital you currently coordinate has a long tradition in various pathologies (hepatic, renal, digestive, hematological, neurological etc.), with notable achievements also in newer fields such as liver transplantation or kidney transplantation.

– Please list some of the notable achievements throughout the history of this hospital.

AC: In reverse chronology, I can tell you that one of the most recent and great achievements registered by the Fundeni Clinical Institute is in the field of hematology and consists of cell therapy – CAR-T, recommended in patients with certain serious forms of leukemia or lymphoma and in which no other treatment can be applied. But let's not forget that the first kidney and liver transplants in Romania were performed here, and a statistic made only between 01.01.2011 and 31.05.2022 shows that 1008 kidney transplants and 801 liver transplants were performed.

Also, with regard to bone marrow transplantation, in the same period of analysis, we have performed 1618 bone marrow transplants, of which 1043 autotransplants and 575 allotransplants. To these, we can also add the extraordinary achievements of colleagues from other medical specialties, who also perform a high-quality medical act.

– What do you consider to be the greatest asset that your hospital has?

2 AC: Certainly the human resource. Some of the most redoubtable professionals in Romanian medicine car-

ry out their activity in the Fundeni Clinical Institute, for the description of whom I consider that words are far too poor. The results obtained by them over time are the mirror of the academic performance of this great Romanian medical center, superimposed, moreover, on the great European centers.

R: The diversity of pathologies, the reputation of the hospital and the reputation of the professional teams are determining factors in the choice made by patients to turn to the hospital you coordinate to benefit from quality healthcare services.

– How do you manage the relationship with the renowned teams of professionals you coordinate?

AC: Through solid communication, based on empathy, respect and full trust, communication that has always led to a careful and correct management of all inherent problems, thus managing to find real solutions to optimize the activity.

– What are the spectrum of pathologies and the pool of origin of the patients who come to your hospital?

AC: Fundeni Clinic Institute represents one of the most important medical units in Romania, both from the point of view of the complexity of the activity carried out and of the medical performance. The institute includes clinical departments that cover broad areas of digestive pathology, hematology, urology, nephrology, neurology, pediatrics, intensive care, internal medicine, some being overspecialized in niche areas. More than 70% of our patients come from beyond the borders of Bucharest.

4. One of the thorny problems that can affect the safety of the medical act is represented by the occurrence of healthcare-associated infections (HAI). Medical units, wards or spaces where healthcare is provided have various risks of occurrence, depending on the specifics of the activity, but also on the risk of the treated patients. Patients with hematological malignancies and those with bone marrow transplantation are categories at risk because they are more prone to contact infections and not defend themselves with all the arsenal available in immunocompetent patients.

– What management measures have you adopted in order to prevent the occurrence of HAI in these patients at risk?

– What measures are adopted at the level of all departments/hospital in order to prevent the occurrence of HAI?

AC: First of all, we must state that healthcare-associated infections can be present in any medical center in the world, and one of the absolute priorities is to drastically reduce the risk of such infections and more.

The collecting of bacteriological air samples from the operating room – but also from other risk areas – is an immutable condition within the Fundeni Clinical Institute. Moreover, regarding the training of all medical staff, we have a program (from prevention to correct and rapid reporting of these infections) that runs periodically.



At the same time, we also have the project that I mentioned earlier, implemented through Large Infrastructure Operational Program (POIM in Romanian).

R. As a teacher and manager with extensive experience:

– What advice could you give young doctors for their future careers?

AC: A great personality of Romanian medicine, who left his fundamental mark on the history of the Fundeni Clinical Institute, Professor Eugeniu Proca, said of himself that he built his entire professional career under the impression of the Latin saying "Labor omnia vincit improbus" ("Hard work wins everything"). I direct this great truth to all our young doctors, adding that academic performance in medicine needs passion, dedication and, above all, empathy towards patients, elements that represent in a unified whole the immutable condition for the professional perfection of all those who choose to embrace this noble profession, medicine.

– What do you consider to be your greatest achievements as a manager of the Fundeni Clinical Institute?

– What major issues have you faced since the start of your manager mandate?

AC: I think that the best answer to both questions is given, on the one hand, by the management of the COVID-19 pandemic and overcoming the health crisis generated by it, on the other hand, challenges that meant for the Fundeni Clinical Institute a large and complex equation, the unknowns of which had to be deciphered quickly and carefully.

In the chapter of achievements, I would also add the recent renovation and modernization of the Pediatric Clinic within IC Fundeni. In this regard, with the help of the Metro-

lis Philanthropic Foundation, the wards and annex spaces in the 2 pediatric departments were modernized.

R. Dear Professor, in your career you have held various management positions, including within medical societies such as the Romanian Society of Pediatric Onco-Hematology (SROHP) or the Romanian Society of Bone Marrow Transplantation (SRTM).

– What exactly made you opt for this way of approaching the problems in the system? What would be the specific problems of these two fields, in the Romanian context?

– Do you think that most of the problems specific to the field of onco-hematology and those of the bone marrow transplant field can also be solved through these societies?

– What expectations do you have from these societies?

AC: These professional medical societies have a defining role in the career of any doctor and outline a multitude of scientific, clinical and especially educational aspects. If we exemplify the activity of these societies only through periodic scientific events, we can observe the achievement of a permanent transfer of expertise, knowledge and good practices to the Romanian health system. Through these scientific manifestations, we amplify this indispensable process for all doctors, namely continuing medical education. Let's be objective and aware of the fact that, in the medicine of the 21st century, novelties in the field of technology, scientific medical research and, ultimately, in the area of innovative therapies are taking place with fantastic speed. Not being integrated into an interactive system, which such societies constantly support, the information necessary for your professional development as a doctor will always be much poorer and, implicitly, everything can turn out to be negative for the patient.