

## The role of users' committees in the (quality and safety) management of Quebec's health and social services centres

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## Context

- Residents' committees in Quebec's healthcare facilities since 1991. Includes in-patients in acute care facilities and residents of long-term care facilities
- Passing of Bill 25 in 2003 (*Act respecting local health and social services network development agencies*, L.R.Q., 2003, c. A-8-1):
  - Led to the creation of Health and Social Services Centres (HSSCs)
- Passing of Bill 83 in 2005 (*Act to amend the Act respecting health services and social services and other legislative provisions*, L.R.Q., 2005, c. 32):
  - Requires all institutions, including HSSCs, to set up users' and residents' committees

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## Objectives of the study

- 1) To elicit the perceptions of presidents of users' and residents' committees regarding (i) the role of the committees and (ii) the committees' involvement in quality and safety concerns within the HSSCs with which they are affiliated;
- 2) To determine how the management staff that works with users' and residents' committees perceives the role and participation of these committees insofar as quality and safety are concerned; and
- 3) To analyze the factors that cause the participation of committees to vary in different facilities within Quebec.

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## Users' and residents' committees

- Mission (*Act respecting health services and social services*, art. 212):
  - Inform users of their rights and obligations
  - Defend users' collective and individual rights and privileges
  - Enhance the quality of services
- Composition (*Act respecting health services and social services*, art. 209 para. 1):
  - At least five members elected by the users of the institution and, in the case of centres for long-term care, one representative designated by and chosen from among the residents' committees. The majority of committee members must be representatives of the public or, if not, parties not employed by the facility or an affiliated entity
- Operational criteria
  - Set forth by the Ministry of Health and Social Services
- Budget
  - 0.04% of the establishment's budget for the prior year
- Publications
  - Report of activities and financial report to be produced yearly and submitted to the Board of Directors

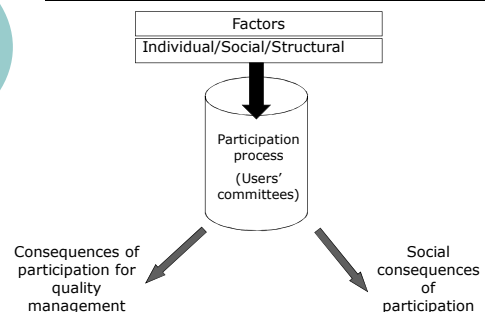
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## The link between user participation and quality management

- Quality management consists of all the activities, behaviours and resources used to maintain and enhance the quality of services and care.
- These activities may involve not only healthcare professionals and staff, but also patients and their families.

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## Theoretical framework (adapted from Contandriopoulos 2002)



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## Methodology

- Case study of a random selection of HSSCs with users' and residents' committees
  - 1 HSSC per administrative region
- Qualitative study: Interviews with three people from each HSSC:
  - The president of the users' committee
  - The president of a residents' committee
  - The executive director or his/her representative
- Data analysis using grounded-theory methods

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## Committee diagrams

One member of each residents' committee sit on of the users' committee. The users' committee has at least one member in every other entity.

## Study Population

- 15 HSSCs (on in each administrative regions)
- 45 people were approached
  - 3 people from each of the 15 HSSCs: the executive director, the president of user's committees and the president of residents' committees
- Management
  - 7 interviews took place: 2 with executive directors and 5 with designated managers
  - 7 interview requests were refused
  - 1 interview request was not answered
- Presidents of users' committees
  - 8 interviews took place, including 1 interview with an individual who was president of both committees
  - 2 interview requests were refused
  - 5 interview requests were not answered
- Presidents of residents' committees
  - 8 interviews took place, including 2 with a designated member representative
  - 3 interview requests were refused
  - 4 interview requests were not answered
- Total
  - 23 interviews covering 11 HSSCs of the 15 administrative regions originally selected
  - In 3 HSSCs, all three people solicited were interviewed

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## Results

## What motivates an individual to preside over a committee

- Prior experience with healthcare services
  - "Members of my family and my wife's family have been housed in long-term care facilities and I have a personal interest in knowing what goes on in the world of health care, or at least do my part." R4
- Concern over an ageing population and those who are the most vulnerable
  - "I'm concerned about the ageing of the population... I'd like to see healthcare facilities adapt to changes in the population... I'd also like to see them give a voice to the vulnerable." R8
- Better quality of care
  - "By taking part, I feel I am doing what I can to improve the quality of life or the quality of care for residents and users, including those in their twilight years." U3/R4
  - "For me, it's all about better services for the user, making sure they understand what services are available, making sure they know their rights... it's about getting the Ministry of Health and Social Services, the administrators and citizens themselves to work at making services better for those who use them." U6

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## Committee presidents' perceptions

### The importance of the committees' role and involvement

<p>The committees are the representatives of users and residents; they act as partners to management and other external parties.</p>	<p>"...not only to defend users' rights but also to make sure that a representative is available at all times. In addition to acting as intermediaries, the committees try to make themselves indispensable and useful to management: to the Board of Directors and even to the Health and Social Services Agency. At the same time, they have to know how keep their place." U4</p>
<p>The committees act as the voice of users and residents. They ensure that management takes users' and residents' concerns into account.</p>	<p>"The committee helps the formal system to function better, it acts as an ally, as a partner. It establishes a relationship of trust between residents and the institution." R8</p> <p>"On a practical level, the principal role is that of a partner to management. It's a role of collaboration, of forging links between residents, users and department heads. It's also a role of representation. We often hear it said that the committee is the voice of those who have no voice." U3/R3</p>

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### Committee presidents' perceptions

#### How the committees' involvement affects quality

By initiating quality-related projects designed to improve the welfare of users, residents and the public at large	"The committee becomes more and more important, it takes on the role of an <u>actor in its own right, like staff, like management</u> . Management comes to depend on the residents' committee to take certain steps, to do things that impact residents' quality of life." R2
By making information about rights and responsibilities available to users, residents and their families	"The committee informs people, residents, families, and gets them involved. It protects users' rights." R4
By advocating for special services that make conditions safer or that improve users' and residents' quality of life	"The allocation of a <u>special budget for safety measures</u> in facilities where safety was a problem. Putting a buzzer system in at meal times so that patients could call staff to help, for example, has avoided certain accidents (...). Safer toilets for the elderly, clear corridors, updating the rules on physical retention, instituting isolation measures... giving residents the option to have personal hygiene services provided by someone of the same gender... making exceptions to non-smoking laws so as to allow for smoking rooms in five long-term care centres." U4

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### Areas affected by quality and safety initiatives

- New documentation
  - Welcome booklet, leaflet that explains the HSSC's mission, explanations for users
- Improvements to the cleanliness and the organization of the facilities
  - Clear corridors, a buzzer system, designated wheelchair lanes, ramps
- Program development
  - Program for elderly people experiencing a loss of autonomy, program to fight cancer

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### Committee presidents' perceptions

#### Dynamics of the relationship between the committees and management

The relationships between management and the committees were described as good, even excellent	"The relationship with management is very good. Management is interested in our concerns and follows up... all quality and safety goals are quite clear... management waits for the committee to be present, it expects committee members to take part in meetings." U4
The status of the relationship is directly linked to committees' involvement in quality management: the more committees learn about management's goals and expectations, the more involved and dynamic they become	"I'm on the Board of Directors and the <u>relationship is excellent</u> . Expectations are communicated clearly." R7 "In my view, for my committee, the relationship is excellent. Often during Board meetings, the president asks someone from the users' committee for the committee's view. It helps a lot when the relationship between the Board of Directors and the representative of the users' committee is a good one." U1

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### Committee presidents' perceptions

#### Dynamics of the relationship between the committees and management

Language barriers	"Often when we deal with management, the <u>language is full of complicated terminology</u> that users don't understand." U1  "One obstacle is the level of the <u>language</u> , the degree of knowledge, among elderly women in long-term care facilities. Most of these women were homemakers with little education... Sometimes, because of their culture or their habits and their degree of education, the women are too shy to express themselves in a group." R2
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### How managers view the committees' role in quality management

#### The importance of the committees' role and involvement

The influence of the committees can be partly attributed to residents' committee members' participation in committees in charge of safety and security	"One member of the users' committee is also a member of the <u>risk management committee. She is the official link between the risk management committee and the other committees, including the residents' and the users' committees</u> . If any group within the institution comes across a concern that can affect users, the users' committee is systematically involved. It is asked to participate in important matters such as follow-up to reports by the Commission of Human Rights, the issue of long waiting times, and focus groups that relay their recommendations to the Board." G1  "The user's committee is also represented in other committees... it submits its report to the Board of Directors, its recommendations are followed up at the appropriate time... management is very proud of the users' committee. There is room for improvement insofar as the residents committee is concerned..." G2
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### How managers view the committees' role in quality management

#### The importance of the committees' role and involvement

The committees act as the voice of users and residents. They ensure that management takes users' and residents' concerns into account.	"The act as the <u>voice of the users</u> , that's the most important thing. Like I said earlier, we can have the best intentions in the world, but if we don't listen to our users, we won't succeed. <u>Users' representatives are there to relay a simple message, to make users' voices heard</u> . For example, the code of ethics, the defence of users' rights... Users participated in the validation process." G1 "The committees are what allow us to say that we don't just work with the professionals' perspective, we also work with <u>the perception of our clients, which is important</u> . We managers tend to move quickly; the committees are there to bring us back to what's important, to allow us to better meet clients' needs. They are our weathervane for client satisfaction." G3
Help with decision-making	"Most of the users' committees' recommendations are communicated directly to the managers concerned. Still, some are communicated to the Board of Directors and the Oversight Committee. This collaboration allows managers to be more directly involved in the day-to-day life of the institution." G5

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## Slide 17

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**J1**

too long

Jenn, 03/09/2009

### How managers view the committees' role in quality management

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#### How the committees' involvement affects quality

Collaboration and partnership between management and the committees	"They bring a different point of view. If we truly listen to what they have to say, they establish the right approach to a problem. Users and families feel that they are taken seriously and that it is worthwhile to express their dissatisfaction. For professional staff, committees are a valuable tool, one that facilitates a better relationship." G5 "The Oversight Committee is the Board of Directors' official designate for dealing with the users' committee. Officially, the users' committee can also contact the executive director and other managers directly. They also have a good informal relationship. The committee is very motivated and involved, its members are very active, but the public is more difficult." G4
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### How managers view the committees' role in quality management

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#### How the committees' involvement affects quality

Limits to the committees' role	"They participate very little in managing the quality and safety of the institution. Besides receiving complaints, they sit on the committees; within official entities, they ask questions. We have no goals with respect to their contributions to quality and safety matters. It is up to us to assume our responsibilities, to keep them informed of what we are doing and to be attentive to problems they point out, to things they want improved... If that constitutes participating in quality and safety management, well then they participate. Management wants the committee to be autonomous, so it's up to them to take a greater role." G4
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### How managers view the committees' role in quality management

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#### Dynamics of the relationship between the committees and management

The relationships between management and the committees were described as good, even excellent	"The relationships are very good and the committee is taken seriously. Their demands and suggestions for improvements inform the HSC's strategies for finding a solution." G5 "We are very attentive to their demands and to respond both to one-time requests and to requests that have to do with the overall functioning of the committee... the relationship is very good... the users' committee does not make many demands but when it makes a demand, we take it into account. For example, when the committee made a demand about an internal policy that it didn't know about, regarding private outside staff, we followed up to make sure that the committee agreed with the policy, we revised the policy and we made sure to follow up and inform users." G4
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### Inter- and intra-committee collaboration

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#### The relationships between the users' committee and the residents' committee

The users' committee ensures that the residents' committee has the means to function	"Good collaboration, with respect, good listening, consensus. We have established operating principles. We have also set up a communication system that allows committee members who live too far to attend all meetings, to participate just the same. The residents' committee flyers were produced with the help of the users' committee. The users' committee brought in a lawyer to explain the role of the residents' committee... the users' committee arranges for workshops for its members as well as for managers who accompany patients at long-term care centres." U4
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### Inter- and intra-committee collaboration

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#### Relationships between the committees at the regional and provincial levels

Collaboration between local committees and the provincial association of residents' committees/ the Committee for Patients' Protection (workshops and congresses)	"Yes, there are workshops in the fall, the Committee for Patients' Protection organises training for members of the users' and residents' committees and staff. When pertinent, the users' committee informs the residents' committee of matters discussed. It helps the residents' committee by organising workshops for its members, it's a way to help them assume their role." U3/R4
No synergy between the two provincial entities	"If I had to give my opinion about the users' committee, I'd say it was good. An example is our own experience. We (the provincial association of residents' committees) held a workshop where we collected everyone from the residents' committees, not just those who represent the residents' committees on the users' committee. The day's events were organised around 2 questions: what does it mean for us to live in a long-term care facility? What is the ideal and what is the reality?" U1

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### Factors that can enhance the committees' participation: Individual factors

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For committee members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Lucidity, critical thinking, openness, team spirit, motivation, involvement, enthusiasm, availability, discretion, discernment, communication and relationship skills. Some degree of knowledge and understanding of the laws that govern the healthcare system</li> <li>o A dynamic president</li> </ul>
For managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Willingness to work with users' representatives</li> <li>o Ability to respect the committees' autonomy</li> <li>o Ability to communicate and build a good relationship</li> <li>o Understanding of the committees' role</li> <li>o Executive leadership and a vision of the benefits of working with the committees</li> </ul>

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### Factors that can enhance or detract from the committees' participation: **Social factors**

For committee members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Different clientele</li> <li>○ Difficulty in recruiting new members</li> <li>○ Goals and operating modes of the users' and residents' committees</li> </ul>
For managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Tolerance of the existence of the committees</li> <li>○ The values of the institution</li> <li>○ The role and importance granted to the committees</li> </ul>

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### Factors that can enhance the committees' participation: **Structural factors**

- Access to information and the capacity to suggest improvements
- An adequate budget and appropriate influence
- Appropriate physical venue / logistical capacity at the HSSC; interest in the committees by the HSSC

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### Discussion

- Appointment, representation and legitimacy procedures
  - Recruitment methods
- Mobilisation themes
  - Social
  - Medical?
- Means and tools of representation
  - Training and the exchange of experiences
- Advocacy methods
  - A quiet revolution

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### Conclusion

- Users' and residents' committees give voice and weight to the concerns of the public
- The fact that committee representatives are not part of a greater structure limits their influence
- The matters addressed by the committees are seldom technical or related to patient-physician consultations
- Contextual elements—particularly the personalities of the executive director and the president—have a strong impact on the types of matters addressed by committees and the extent of the committees' involvement
- Does the fact that users sit on several committees within the institution, dilute users' and residents' committees' contributions to quality and safety issues?

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Thank you!

Questions?

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