

Hospital Rises to the Challenge

This article reflects the status at the time of its publication. The content may since have become outdated.

20/05/2020 Battling the coronavirus is part of everyday operations at Munich's Rechts der Isar Hospital.

Elke Frank always starts her day by looking at her phone. "The first thing I do when I get up is check my e-mail," says the commercial director of Munich's Rechts der Isar Hospital. "Sometimes I get a call in the middle of the night," she adds. That has been happening more often now since the outbreak of the coronavirus—for example, if a colleague from China offers to arrange a shipment of personal protective equipment. When Dr. Frank arrives at her office in a pre-war building of the historic hospital, she begins by checking in with other directors and staff. "Right now, of course, our priority is on dealing with the pandemic. But we're also trying to maintain a certain sense of normality, and our everyday work continues as well."

With around forty clinics and departments, this hospital at the Technical University of Munich's School of Medicine is known as a supramaximal facility—meaning it could handle a huge influx of patients in a

short period of time. Together with Munich's other university hospital at Ludwig Maximilian University (LMU), it treats around half of the Covid-19 patients in the state capital of Bavaria, which has a population of nearly one and a half million. "In addition to our local patients, we take on very severe cases that smaller hospitals are generally not equipped to handle," says Frank, who has a business degree in addition to a doctorate in biology. The two university hospitals also advise state ministries and authorities on health policy matters. Their medical personnel routinely exchange information about Covid-19 with colleagues around the world. "We have close ties with Italy, Spain, and China, for example. The network of research projects that already existed before the outbreak has been helpful in this regard."

Budgets take a back seat

The coronavirus has led to a temporary suspension of the usual economic mechanisms at hospitals. In mid-March 2020, the federal government ordered hospitals throughout Germany to postpone elective operations and treatments. Other countries have taken similar actions, including Austria, Switzerland, and Spain, as well as parts of the U.S. The aim is to avoid running out of resources to treat seriously ill patients. But this also means that hospitals are losing an important source of revenue. Nevertheless, budget issues are superseded by the imperative to control the pandemic.

"The state government instructed us to ensure sufficient treatment capacities under all circumstances," says Frank. The hospital had already made plans back in February to take steps such as increasing the number of ICU beds. "If needed, we can crank up our capacities relatively quickly," she adds.

That being said, the hospital is not in the most advantageous position to handle the upcoming challenges. "Digitalization could be a big help to us—if we already had a state-of-the-art system in place," says Frank. Yet she also notes that efforts to digitalize are gaining momentum. "To a certain extent, Covid-19 is giving us the impetus to catch up," she remarks. Roman Hipp, the Senior Partner at Porsche Consulting in charge of the health sector, views the Munich facility as representative of many large hospitals. "Triggered by the pandemic, hospitals are introducing more digital technologies at faster rates in order to support their personnel and provide the best possible care for their patients. Those that had already instituted smart strategies now have a clear head start," he says. Another important task at present is to harness this momentum and build networks. "Hospitals will not be able to advance digitalization on their own," says Hipp. "To derive the greatest benefits from digital ways of serving patients, companies in the medical technology and pharmaceutical sectors will need to add their own expertise to the mix, as will start-ups and investors." Specialized future-oriented conferences such as the Digital Health Summit at the Technical University of Munich are well suited to forge connections among key players in the healthcare field—with the shared aim of promoting digital innovations.

Weaknesses are becoming evident

At Rechts der Isar Hospital, the extraordinary circumstances are prompting changes not only in technology but also with respect to human resources. “Our employees are helping out wherever they’re needed,” says the commercial director. This level of interdisciplinary collaboration was hardly imaginable in the past. But Frank also notes that the response to the virus has revealed some weaknesses. For one thing, individual departments at the hospital still have different processes. That affects not only patient management but also areas like surgical processes and sterile goods management. “We’ll have to work together to standardize our processes in the future,” she says.

Initial steps have already been taken. In 2019, the hospital worked together with Porsche Consulting to define management guidelines and to strategically realign commercial organizational structures. “The improved processes are all the more helpful to us right now,” says Frank. “Take the twenty-five process and transformation facilitators who were trained over the course of those projects. Some of them are providing useful structural recommendations at our crisis management sessions, which are laying the best possible groundwork for the decisions we need to make. That is of great help to the board of management.”

Dr. Frank is pleased to see the expressions of appreciation for hospitals and their employees. “I hope it continues, and also that everyone from custodians and cleaning personnel to front-line providers like nursing teams and physicians regain a sharper awareness of their respective roles. That could lead to a new view of healthcare in general.” For that to happen, however, all the healthcare-related professions and occupations would need to make use of the opportunities provided by this new level of appreciation. The commercial director has some doubts as to whether that will in fact occur. “However, I do believe that this situation will lead to some positive developments overall for hospitals.”

MEDIA ENQUIRIES



Jan Boris Wintzenburg

Director Communications and Marketing
Porsche Consulting GmbH
+49 (0) 152 3911 8663
jan_boris.wintzenburg@porsche-consulting.com

Link Collection

Link to this article
https://newsroom.porsche.com/en/2020/company/porsche-consulting-management-consultancy-hospital-munich-coronavirus-20960.html

Media Package
https://pmdb.porsche.de/newsroomzips/86e21ce0-62f6-486b-b3f9-1cab5ad56f37.zip

External Links
https://www.porsche-consulting.com/en/home/

Dr. Ing. h.c. F. Porsche Aktiengesellschaft
Porscheplatz 1
70435 Stuttgart