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Miettinen, Marjukka I: Remote management in healthcare as experienced by unit managers

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The purpose of this study was to increase the understanding of remote management experiences in central hospitals as experienced by unit managers. The aim of the work was to produce information that can be used in the development of remote management practices in healthcare. The results of the study can also be utilized to support remote management skills of unit managers in health care, such as the planning and implementation of telework.

The study was implemented as a qualitative thematic interview, and central hospital unit managers participated (n = 10). The interview was conducted by unit managers who had more than one unit to be managed and the management is carried out remotely on a different side of the hospital than where the units to be managed are located or remotely at a different office or at the manager's home. The material was analyzed using material-based content analysis to guide the theory.

According to the theoretical framework of this study remote management of a unit managers is facilitated by mutual trust and good interaction in the work community. Also, good control of digital tools and systematical use of various programs are essential. In remote management, it is important to focus on sharing information as well as on the comprehensibility of communication. If there are deficiencies in any of the areas above, successful remote management in the organization becomes more difficult.

This study provided experiential data on remote management in central hospitals. Unit managers highlighted factors that promote and hinder remote management. The results of the study show that remote management is affected by three main factors: factors related to the manager herself, factors related to hospital organization and factors related to digital tools. As a barrier to remote management, several unit managers pointed out that even if remote management is possible, they would rather be on site at the hospital in order to be available and closer to their own subordinates. Based on the results, it can be stated that in central hospital organizations, remote management and related operating methods have not yet become established. As a further research topic, it would be interesting to study for example how employees perceive remote management or what things contribute managers well-being at work.