Implementation going astray - what are the signs?

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Problem and background

The use of a generic implementation model can give a more precise picture of the danger signs which shows that an implementation is at risk and needs attention. How can these signs be handled as part of the implementation process?

Materials and method

The object of our investigation is a phenomenological, qualitative and retrospective observation of events in implementation of an Electronic Patient Medication system in a larger Danish Hospital. Documents and observations from 9 cases (departments) have been investigated to find and extract danger signs.

Analysis

From our data it appears that implementation develops in widely differing ways in problematic and non-problematic implementation processes. No single danger sign is knockout critical. Management involvement is critical but not as a single knockout sign. Increased simultaneous danger signs predict a problematic implementation. Important is the relations between the danger signs.

Conclusion

We do not believe that identification of single danger signs alone leads to better direct control and contributes to increased awareness of organization and non-rational factors which can obstruct the implementation. Implementation demands contingency plans and a “system” capable of identifying these danger signs and their relations before they can endanger the process. Our analysis shows, that it is possible to identify and describe these danger signs, which enables continuous monitoring, and thereby prevent them from turning up as “surprises”. We feel that monitoring several danger signs should be done by a ward-external organization ensuring punctual intervention.