

Saludinnova: A Social Network of Innovators in Health

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Abstract

The Bank of Innovative Practices (BIP) is an initiative of the Health Department of Andalusia together with Public Foundation of Andalusia for Technological Progress and Personnel Training (IAVANTE Foundation). The goal of the Bank is to promote and encourage innovation within the public health system of Andalusia identifying innovative actions carried out by healthcare professionals. The Bank also disseminates the innovative practices of these professionals to the rest of the system, as a way to acknowledge the unselfish work they do for improving the quality of the healthcare system provided for the population. The strategy of the project contributes to the innovation and modernization of the healthcare system aiming to generate higher levels of well-being and progress for the Andalusian society at large, and especially, for the users of the Public Health System of Andalusia. Through the so called innovative practices and ideas, the BIP gathers all the actions, both ongoing projects and proposals of innovation produced at the healthcare centers of Andalusia and it makes them available to all its members. In order to do that, the Bank of Innovative Practices has a number of useful tools of dissemination for the healthcare professionals. The improvement of these tools is a continuous process: the portal www.saludinnova.com, the Award to the Best Innovative Practice, the Innovative Ideas Contest, the Health Innovation Forum and Communities or Working Groups. However, the resource which contributes the most for the professionals to use the BIP is the Innovation Healthcare Agents. This Network is present in each hospital center and it encourages the development of new ideas and innovative practices.

Key words: Human Resources Formation; Innovation Health Sciences, Technology and Innovation Management; Diffusion of Innovation; Public Health; National Health Programs; Health Personnel; Hospitals.

Resumen

Saludinnova: Una Red Social para Innovadores en Salud

El Banco de Prácticas Innovadoras (BPI) es una iniciativa de la Secretaría de Salud de la Junta de Andalucía junto con Fundación Pública Andaluza para el Avance Tecnológico y Entrenamiento Personal (Fundación IAVANTE) que tiene por objetivo promover y fomentar la innovación en el Sistema Sanitario Público de Andalucía (SSPA), mediante la identificación de acciones innovadoras que lleven a cabo los profesionales sanitarios. A su vez, el Banco promociona y difunde las prácticas innovadoras de los profesionales al resto del sistema y de esta forma se reconoce la labor desinteresada que realizan por la mejora de la calidad del servicio sanitario que se ofrece a la ciudadanía. La estrategia del proyecto contribuye a la innovación y modernización del sistema de salud, con el objetivo de generar mayores niveles de bienestar y progreso para la sociedad andaluza en general y para los usuarios del Sistema Sanitario Público de Andalucía, en particular. A través de las denominadas prácticas e ideas innovadoras, el BPI aglutina todas las acciones, tanto proyectos en marcha como propuestas, de innovación que se producen en los centros sanitarios de Andalucía, poniéndolas a disposición y en conocimiento de todos sus miembros. Para ello, el Banco de Prácticas Innovadoras dispone de una serie de herramientas de utilidad y difusión a disposición de los profesionales sanitarios y en continua mejora y crecimiento: el portal www.saludinnova.com, el Premio a la Mejor Práctica Innovadora, Concurso de Ideas Innovadoras, el Foro de Innovación Sanitaria y Comunidades o grupos de trabajo. Sin embargo el recurso que aporta una mayor contribución en el acercamiento del BPI a los profesionales sanitarios lo constituye la Red de Agentes Sanitarios de Innovación (AASSI), presentes en cada uno de los centros hospitalarios y que facilitan que surjan ideas y se desarrollen prácticas innovadoras.

Palabras clave: Formación de Recursos Humanos; Innovación; Gestión de Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación en Salud; Difusión de Innovaciones; Salud Pública; Programas Nacionales de Salud; Personal de Salud; Hospitales.



Saludinnova: Uma Rede Social de Inovadores em Saúde

O Banco de Práticas Inovadoras (BPI) é uma iniciativa da Secretaria de Saúde da Andaluzia junto com a Fundação Pública da Andaluzia para o Avanço Tecnológico e a Capacitação Pessoal (Fundação IAVANTE) que tem como objetivo promover e encorajar a inovação no Sistema Público de Saúde da Andaluzia, através da identificação de ações inovadoras desenvolvidas pelos profissionais da saúde. Ao mesmo tempo, o Banco promove e divulga as práticas inovadoras dos profissionais para o resto do sistema, reconhecendo, desta forma, o trabalho desinteressado feito em prol da melhoria da qualidade do serviço de saúde oferecido à cidadania. A estratégia do projeto contribui para a inovação e modernização do sistema de saúde, com o objetivo de gerar maiores níveis de bem estar e progresso para a sociedade da Andaluzia em geral e para os usuários do Sistema Público de Saúde de Andaluzia em particular. Através das chamadas práticas e ideias inovadoras, o BPI reúne todas as ações, tanto os projetos em curso como as propostas de inovação, produzidos nos centros de saúde da Andaluzia, colocando-as à disposição e conhecimento de todos seus membros. Para isso, o Banco de Práticas Inovadoras conta com uma série de ferramentas de utilidade e divulgação à disposição dos profissionais da saúde que estão em contínua melhoria e crescimento: o portal www.saludinnova.com, o Prêmio à Melhor Prática Inovadora, o Concurso de Ideias Inovadoras, o Foro de Inovação em Saúde e Comunidades ou grupos de trabalho. Entretanto, o recurso que contribui mais para a aproximação do BPI dos profissionais da saúde é a Rede de Agentes de Saúde da Inovação, presentes em todos os centros hospitalares e que facilitam o surgimento de ideias e o desenvolvimento de práticas inovadoras.

Palavras-chave: Formação de Recursos Humanos; Inovação; Gestão de Ciência, Tecnologia e Inovação em Saúde; Difusão de Inovações; Saúde Pública; Programas Nacionais de Saúde; Pessoal de Saúde; Hospitais.

INTRODUCTION

The Bank of Innovative Practices was created in July 2006 with the aim of being a useful tool for all the healthcare professionals (specialized physicians, residents, researchers, managers, nurses, nursing assistants, etc.) of the Andalusian Public Health System who dedicate their efforts to improve the quality when performing their tasks and in the service offered to the citizens, through the introduction of innovative processes, techniques, products or services.

The mission of the Bank is to identify innovative actions whether they are projects or proposals called innovative practices and ideas, respectively, and to disseminate them to the rest of the Andalusian Public Health System, channeling the innovation produced at the healthcare centers and enabling the acknowledgment of the work done by health professionals.

The innovation strategy of the Bank of Innovative Practices is described in the II Quality Plan of the Andalusian Public Health System that looks for the improvement and modernization of the system with the goal of generating higher levels of health, well-being and economic progress for the region of Andalusia. This goal is structured in three strategic lines: innovation regarding citizenship; innovation in the professional performance through the use of information and communication technologies; and organizational innovation.

SALUD INNOVA

In order to achieve its goals and according to the strategy established in the II Quality Plan of the Andalusian Public

Health System, the Bank of Innovative Practices started a series of media and technological tools, the website www.saludinnova.com being one of them.

Salud Innova is the dissemination window of the innovative actions carried out by healthcare professionals in Andalusia. It is an open and free platform where users publish their ideas or practices, allowing their colleagues to participate at the same time.

The innovative ideas are creative concepts or thoughts in the mind of the professional which had not been yet materialized into a concrete project. Currently, *Salud Innova* has 616 ideas published and has organized the Contest of Innovative Ideas three times achieving huge success in terms of participants.

Innovative practices are projects implemented on a specialized knowledge area, where the working group shares lessons learned based on reflection and experience in that particular area. There are a total of 283 projects registered in *Salud Innova*.

The portal works with a system where all its members interact through different communication possibilities available. Thus, a social platform based on Web 2.0 tools is created where those professionals who are registered have a place to meet and relate with each other through communities with access to blogs, discussion forums, news and documents; multimedia content and also, in the section called *My profile*, they can create their own network of people they want to contact.

Registered participants have different ways to access information: current news on health innovation, a section with useful documents for developing innovative proposals together with interesting links within the field of health innovation. They can also check the project areas where they

can find strategic innovative projects published and driven by the Health Department of Andalusia.

In addition, users receive a weekly or monthly newsletter with the latest news on the portal. They can also receive the latest information on their mobile phone.

Therefore, through *Salud Innova* professionals of the Andalusian Public Health System (physicians, nursing staff, non-medical staff, etc.) are able to do the following:

- To register innovative practices carried out at their health unit;
- To contribute with innovative ideas that may help to improve the system or that can provide an element to further develop future proposals and projects;
- To participate with comments and opinions on practices, ideas or news found at *Salud Innova*;
- To vote for the content available at *Salud Innova*;
- To participate in the Communities they wish or to suggest the creation of new communities.

Salud Innova has a scoring system as a way to acknowledge the activity, participation and dynamism of the professionals registered in the website. This scoring system is called *Karma*: each activity carried out in the portal is awarded with a numerical value associated to the member's profile. The more active the user is, the higher the score achieved.

The portal presents a classification of the most active users according to this activity scoring system.

The Bank of Innovative Practices through www.saludinnova.com answers doubts, questions or suggestions from the professionals registered in the portal in less than 24 hours, helping to promote constant communication and

feedback as one of the key elements in the project development.

Moreover, users also have other ways to solve their doubts: the web areas *FAQ* and *Glossary*, where they can find answers to the most frequently asked questions and the most commonly used terms in the portal. Also, users have links of interest and a summary of the main statistics of the portal.

In order to evaluate the Bank services, users can fill in a satisfaction survey available at *Salud Innova*, as a way of having a permanent follow up of the satisfaction level of users.

Until January 22nd 2010, *Salud Innova* had almost 2.600 participants registered. The following figure shows the evolution of the number of users registered every year:

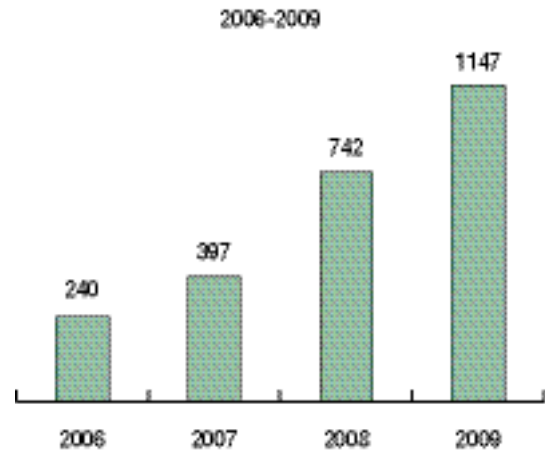


Figure 01 - Number of registrations/year.

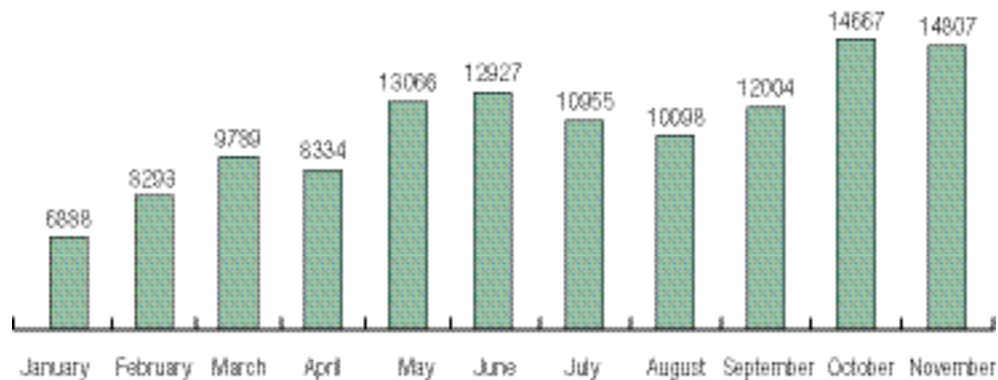


Figure 02 - Visits to Portal Salud Innova.



Figure 03 - Bank of Innovative Practices *Salud Innova* portal

NETWORK OF INNOVATION HEALTHCARE AGENTS

The Bank of Innovative Practices with its aim of encouraging innovation and disseminate it in a more dynamic way, has created a network of health professionals present at the different centers and agencies of the Andalusian Public Health System, contributing to bring the Bank and the professionals of each center closer together.

All professionals have an Innovation Healthcare Agent at their health units; a person who knows the daily reality and is there to give them advice and help them with their innovative ideas.

The Bank of Innovative Practices encourages the collaboration with these representatives. Since they are at the workplace, these agents can help in a coordinated way advising professionals and professional groups who may need methodology and resources for producing, acknowledging and disseminating the best innovative ideas and practices.

Therefore, each professional has the help of an Innovation Healthcare Agent who is responsible for speeding up innovation, guiding and gathering information for documentation of innovative practices, identifying innovation areas, ideas, people, projects and innovative practices, being a link between professionals and the Bank of Innovative Practices, taking innovation to related areas, etc.

At the moment, the Bank of Innovative Practices has a

total of 81 Innovation Healthcare Agents who carry out the task of identifying innovation actions every day, enabling ideas and projects to be accessible and disseminated in Salud Innova, making them available to the healthcare system and to everyone who visits the portal.

The agents have their own working community where they publish papers, participate in forums, access documentation and innovation projects. The Bank of Innovative Practices organizes its own training and cohesion activities for the Innovation Healthcare Agents where they participate in a very active way with suggestions and proposals for the project.

Therefore, the Innovation Healthcare Agent acts like the spokesperson of the innovation carried out by healthcare professionals at their workplaces in order to improve their daily work and to provide a better quality service for the population.

INNOVATIVE PRACTICES AND IDEAS

Healthcare professionals are free to publish on *www.saludinova.com* Innovative Practices and Ideas they consider important for improving the healthcare service provided for the citizens, for the benefit of their work organization and also in their professional performance through the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT).

Users can write comments and vote for the ideas or

practices published.

For the Bank of Innovative Practices an Innovative Idea has to be: a proposal of an improvement that appears in a creative way in the mind of a health professional but that has not been yet materialized into a specific project. The idea of this gathering of proposals is that professionals may debate and complement the contributions made by their colleagues or get to know other possible alternative ways of doing their job differently from what they are doing at the moment.

In addition, an Innovative Practice is defined as: a project implemented on a specialized knowledge area that implies a significant and new change in its sphere of activity.

The dissemination of these initiatives already implemented represents an important efficiency tool for the healthcare system since it enables other health centers to quickly incorporate improvements that had already been developed and validated elsewhere.

Awards

The users of *Salud Innova* enter their innovative ideas in the portal during the whole year and those who wish can participate in the Contest of Innovative Ideas which takes place in May and June.

The contest promotes innovation among professionals with innovative ideas, it identifies potential innovations which are in an initial stage and disseminates them among all the agents of the healthcare system, acknowledging their efforts.

In its third edition in 2009, there were 172 ideas divided into the three categories already mentioned. It means an increase when compared with previous years: 144, in 2008 and 131, in 2007.

Every year the best innovative projects or practices published on the *Salud Innova* portal receive an acknowledgement with the election of the Best Innovative Practice, awarded to the most outstanding practice in the three strategic categories of innovation defined:

- *Innovation regarding citizenship*: the creation of a new role and a higher level of demand from public services makes interactivity with citizen through different channels, pro-activity of the system (specially in the areas of promotion and prevention) and service customization essential steps to take, in order to be closer to the population;
- *Innovation in the professional performance through the use of ICT*: the knowledge gathered in the healthcare system on the needs for new informa-

tion systems to support the medical practice and the different spheres of management, together with the impressive development of ICT make it possible to turn this accumulated knowledge into new and powerful technological tools that will make easier and support the performance of healthcare professionals in the Andalusian Public Health System;

- *Organizational Innovation*: the continuous learning process that takes place in a complex system of constant interactions such as the public health system (in the case of Andalusia with more than 90.000 professionals and 8 million users) enables its transformation into more efficient ways of organization.

The award acknowledges improvements and changes that create value in the Andalusian Public Health System and that has been implemented with positive results for the population, the organization or the daily work.

Both practices and ideas are evaluated by an Advisory Committee that decides which of them fit into the criteria described and which represents the greatest innovation.

The winners of both contests receive their awards in public events from regional authorities responsible for healthcare innovation and they have the chance of taking part in international events on health innovation.

HEALTH INNOVATION FORUM

The Health Innovation Forum became the meeting place for healthcare professionals with a common interest who want to improve healthcare, to incorporate innovation into the way of doing and thinking their daily routine and to share experiences and expectations with their colleagues.

Each year the event takes place in a different Andalusian city and it has two sections: a first part with talks by experts in creativity, innovation and research where they show their point of view and encourage the creative effort of the participants; and a second part where participants actively participate in workshops developing and evaluating innovative proposals in a collaborative manner.

The aim of the Forum is to encourage the innovation culture, providing the interested professionals with tools and methodologies, encouraging them to work in groups and highlighting the importance of incorporating innovation in their daily professional activities.

The Innovation Healthcare Agents have their own meeting at the event with their own specific activities according to the



Figure 04 - Salud Innova Portal.

important role they have in the Bank of Innovative Practices.

In the last event that took place in November 2009 in Seville, around 300 professionals had the chance to listen to creative experts and inventors such as Joaquín Llorente and Pep Torres.

During the Health Innovation Forum the winners of the Innovative Ideas Contest and the Best Innovative Practice receive their awards.

COMMUNITIES AND SOCIAL NETWORK

Communities are made up of a group of professionals with a common interest or health innovation area. The members of the Community have the same common aim, need or goal: they share ideas, experiences, projects, documents and papers in order to establish a productive dialogue on the common area that brings them together.

The users of *Salud Innova* can propose the creation of new Communities according to the interests of the group of professionals and they are created by the agents of the Bank of Innovative Practices. Any user who has previously registered on www.saludinnova.com can join any Community he/she wishes. Each community has the following sections where all members can participate: Blog, Forum, News, Documents, Related Practices and Related Projects.

At the moment the Bank of Innovative Practices has 17 different Communities, some examples are: Primary Healthcare and Family, Continuity of Care, Network of Researchers, Nursing in Urgencies, Bioethics and Citizen's Participation. The Communities currently have a total of 446 participating professionals.

As a complement to Communities, users also have an additional element that enhances collaboration and contact among those with common interests: the social network. Each user can create his/her own network distributed in three sections:

1. Work colleagues: the list of people belonging to his/her same health center is automatically created and showed to each user.
2. Community members: it is also produced automatically and it has all the members that coincide with the user in any Community.
3. Friends: this third group is made manually by the user including those users with contributions and activity that he/she considers interesting.

Professionals can contact and get to know any of them.

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