

Zoom On: Eric de Roodenbeke, CEO of IHF



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Eric de Roodenbeke is the Chief Executive Officer of the International Hospital Federation (IHF), a position he has held since 2008. He earned a PhD in Health Economics at the University of Paris 1, Sorbonne as well as a Hospital Administration Diploma from ENSP Rennes and a Diploma in Public Health from the University of Nancy, all in France.

We asked Dr. de Roodenbeke our 7 Questions:

1. What are your key areas of interest and research?

I have been working for now more than 20 years on health system issues with a special focus on service delivery and the role of hospitals. As the head of the International Hospital Federation (www.ihf-fih.org) it is possible to liaise between concerns expressed by healthcare organisations from around the world and the global priorities that are shaped in the international arena by the prominent international organisations. This is fascinating and at the same time obliges modesty when we touch on the complexity of the issues that need to be taken into consideration to improve health of the people.

The challenges healthcare is facing are just reflecting the cross road of the evolution of our society and this means that we need to be aware of the developments in a large range of areas: technology (genomics, IT, etc.), epidemiology, process engineering, societal movements, environment issues,... Of course no one can be expert in any of those but it is important to be able to monitor the development and harness the key shifts that will impact healthcare to stay on top of the curve.

2. What are the major challenges in your field?

Mobilising decision makers to go beyond their daily constraints and national horizon. If these are very important for all we also need to be shaping up the future and for that proactive international presence is necessary. Although the healthcare service delivery is a major industry playing a key role in economies, the facility decision makers do not realise their voice is very weak. They are not heard because of the atomisation of the sector. The only way to make a difference in a global world is to come together and speak with one voice under an international organisation that represents the sector key interests. The variety of nature of service delivery organisations is an obstacle to this united approach but when we listen to leaders from around the world we also realise that the critical challenges are the same for all: who does not want to improve patient safety and quality of care? Who does not face difficulties with payment systems that do not support enhancement of performance in relation with core missions? Who is not trying to improve the management performance?

3. What is your top management tip?

Transparency and consistency. I believe that organisations have often difficulties because people do not understand decisions that are made. For that it is important to be very transparent and explain the reasons backing up decisions. Not everyone has to agree but no one must ignore and build up its own story.

4. What would you single out as a career highlight?

Working for the World Bank was the most challenging experience for me. At the same time it was about understanding complex process of a very large organisation and being able to show to a very competitive professional environment that the analytical mind and professional skills are at the level expected by this institution.

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5. If you had not chosen this career path you would have become a...?

I believe that this is the only professional career where I feel comfortable. It combines my appetite for system approach with my interest in people and the need to be discussing at global level... Now if you ask what I would do if I could have a living without working I would respond, explore the world, especially the areas where nature is still preserved from major human interaction.

6. What are your personal interests outside of work?

Well this is overlapping the last comment...I hike as much as possible because it is at the same time good for your body and your mind. We need more spirituality and for me this is not about religion but about getting out of the consumers' society madness...just not to have but to be.

7. Your favourite quote?

I always found that quotes were of little interest...there are great minds but each of us can also have great ideas... and at the end of the day any great idea has probably been already thought of by others...so let's express what we think and feel in our own way.

Biography

Prior to his IHF appointment, Dr. de Roodenbeke was a Senior Health Specialist at the World Health Organization (WHO) for the Global Health Workforce Alliance (GHWA), where he developed strategies for regional responses to the HRH crisis.

He served as a Senior Health Specialist at the World Bank (AFTH2 & WBI) from 2004 to 2006, during which time he was a team leader for several health intervention, educational, management and capacity building programmes, mostly in Africa.

From 2001 to 2003, Dr. de Roodenbeke directed the 700-bed University Hospital of Tours. From 1999 to 2001, he was the Senior Officer responsible for hospital and health financing interventions at the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Prior to that, he served the French Ministry of Cooperation as a senior officer on hospital policy expertise.

Dr. de Roodenbeke was Deputy Director of the 870-bed University Hospital of NANTES from 1994 to 1996. This followed a five-year stint as the expert, task team leader for the construction and management of a 500-bed hospital in Burkina Faso. From 1984 to 1989, he was Deputy Director of Epinal-Vosges General Hospital in France.

Dr. de Roodenbeke frequently writes about issues related to hospital organisation, health facility management and human resources. He has numerous publications pertaining to health systems reforms, health policies, insurance and financing.

He is multilingual in French (his native language), English, basic Greek and German.

Reference: International Hospital Federation

Published on : Mon, 29 Sep 2014