

CORONAVIRUS EMERGENCY

THE KEY ROLE OF HEALTHCARE ENGINEERING IN CREATING NEW OPERATIONAL UNITS FOR INTENSIVE AND SUB-INTENSIVE THERAPIES

It is the task of the Healthcare Engineer, especially in these days of emergency crisis, to identify, build and maintain new areas for intensive and sub-intensive care units. The President of S.I.A.I.S. states that "Knowledge of the hospital environment enables us to direct the Department Heads in their decisions towards faster and more feasible solutions".

Bologna, March 27, 2020 - In the war against the Coronavirus there are two advanced frontlines that fight side by side, made by those who are in the trenches and those who, meticulously but rapidly, prepare those trenches. The latter are the ones **who, in practice, identify and build new areas for intensive and sub-intensive care units, in full compliance with all technical-hygienic and sanitary regulations, verifying their suitability, reestablishing abandoned wards or planning the construction of new areas.**

With daily self-sacrifice and commitment and as a result of their experience and specific professionalism in the field of hospital structures and technological systems, the engineers, architects and health technicians along with the professionals of our NHS, are succeeding in creating first survival areas for patients. With additional help from other technicians, such as industrial experts and surveyors, they are managing the technical Areas of the Hospitals and ASLs (Local Health Units) and are offering an indispensable contribution to the General and Health Management Departments.

"The Healthcare Engineer activities are incisive and effective because they know the hospital environment in great depth and this enables them to help directors of departments find quicker and more feasible solutions" as Daniela Pedrini, President of **S.I.A.I.S.**, the **Italian Society of Architecture and Engineering for Healthcare**, based in Bologna, explains. "Their selected and proposed solutions also fulfill the technical and hygienic-sanitary requirements, thanks to their extended knowledge of all health departments, acquired through the design and maintenance activities of all the health environment inside hospitals and in general in healthcare facilities".

SIAIS, which was due to host the largest global conference of this sector in Rome in May, inevitably postponed the congress to another date - before the Italian Government's travel restrictions were issued - had been gathering its regional coordinators for constant feedback on the situation and which continues to be monitored virtually. "It is a framework from which it sees activities carried out in parallel in the presently non-critical Regions, to prepare in essence those health areas deemed necessary to deal with any emergency situations arising from Coronavirus".

But the story doesn't finish there: **the engineers, architects and healthcare technicians, who accordingly now go back and forth from the second to the first line, are also entrusted with the daily and continuous task of checking and verifying the efficiency, functionality and safety of all the technological systems in use in all healthcare departments and especially, in this critical moment, the intensive care units.** As the

President concludes, "The air conditioning systems have to guarantee optimal conditions for the microclimate, for the air exchange and for air purity, the electric systems and the sanitary equipment, electrically powered, have to work regularly, ensuring the safety of patients and of medical staff. Finally, the medical gas systems (oxygen, medical air, vacuum, etc.) have to guarantee functionality and safety in compliance with current norms and legislation".

Consequently, it becomes clear that the role of healthcare engineers, architects and highly trained professionals, with competence and in-depth knowledge of all aspects of the health structures, is important and indispensable to the team of professionals entrusted to the general management of patient health and safety and all the medical staff around patients. If this is fundamental in the ordinary routine of healthcare facilities, then their presence becomes essential in this phase of emergency due to the coronavirus; especially given the need that hospital management has to provide new beds for patients affected by Covid19, rapidly and sometimes immediately, in the most efficient and sustainable way as well as being compliant with all legal standards, as explained above.

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