

# Career Planning and Management of Healthcare Talent Based on Life Cycle Theory

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**Abstract:** This study aims to explore career planning and management strategies for healthcare talent based on life cycle theory, in order to enhance retention rates and job satisfaction among healthcare professionals. Through qualitative research methods combined with a case study of Liannan County Hospital, the study analyzes the needs and challenges faced by healthcare talent at different career stages. The findings reveal major issues confronted by healthcare talent during career planning, including compensation and benefits, career development opportunities, work environment, and organizational support. The study proposes a series of targeted management strategies, such as individualized career development paths, continuous professional training, and support for work-life balance, to promote long-term retention and career growth of healthcare talent. The conclusion emphasizes that healthcare organizations should consider the life cycle needs of healthcare talent in career planning and management to achieve optimal talent allocation and sustainable hospital development.

**Keywords:** healthcare talent, career planning, life cycle theory, retention rate, job satisfaction

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Research Background and Significance

As China's healthcare system reform deepens, the rational allocation and effective management of medical talents have become crucial for enhancing the quality of healthcare services. Especially in rural and remote areas, the shortage of medical talents is particularly prominent, significantly impacting the health levels of local residents and the accessibility of healthcare services. Therefore, researching how to conduct career planning and management for medical talents based on life cycle theory can not only support the growth of medical talents but also promote the balanced distribution of medical resources and achieve equity in healthcare services. The significance of this research lies in exploring the laws of medical talents' career development to provide theoretical and practical guidance for medical institutions to formulate scientific human resource management strategies.

Scholars at home and abroad have conducted extensive research on the career planning and management of medical talents. In foreign countries, life cycle theory has been widely applied in career development research, emphasizing the differences in career needs and motivations of individuals at different life stages. Domestic research has focused more on the recruitment and retention of medical talents, with relatively few systematic studies on career planning and management. Although existing research provides a certain perspective for understanding the career development of medical talents, there is still a lack of in-depth exploration on how to integrate the characteristics of the medical industry and individual life cycle needs for comprehensive career planning and management. This research aims to fill this research gap and provide a new perspective for the comprehensive development of medical talents.

### 1.2 Research Objectives and Questions

The main purpose of this research is to explore the needs and challenges faced by medical talents at different career stages, construct a framework for career planning and management of medical talents based on life cycle theory, and propose corresponding strategic recommendations. The research questions focus on: What are the primary career development needs of medical talents at different life cycle stages? What problems exist in current medical human resource management practices? How can effective career planning and management strategies be formulated based on the life cycle characteristics of medical talents? By answering these questions, this research aims to provide targeted human resource management strategies for medical institutions to promote the growth and retention of medical talents.

### 1.3 Research Scope and Methods

This research selects medical talents in rural China as the research subject, taking Liannan County Hospital as an example. Using qualitative research methods, in-depth interviews and case studies were conducted with 23 healthcare professionals during the period from 2022 to 2023 through semi-structured interviews to gain insights into the career development experiences and needs of medical talents. The research scope covers various career stages of medical talents, including recruitment, training, promotion, and resignation. The research methods include literature review, field interviews, data analysis, and thematic discussions. Through these methods, this research aims to reveal the inherent laws of medical talents' career development and provide a basis for medical institutions to formulate scientific and reasonable human resource management strategies.

## 2 Theoretical Basis and Literature Review

### 2.1 Overview of Life Cycle Theory

Life cycle theory originated in biology and has been widely

applied in social science fields, including career development research. This theory suggests that an individual's growth, development, and change are continuous over time and follow a certain regularity. In the field of career development, life cycle theory emphasizes that individuals have different career needs and goals at different life stages. For example, individuals in the early career stage may focus more on skill acquisition and career exploration, while those in the mid-career stage may prioritize job stability and career advancement. This research uses life cycle theory as the theoretical basis for analyzing the career planning and management of medical talents, aiming to explore the characteristics and needs of medical talents at different life cycle stages and provide targeted management strategies for medical institutions.

## 2.2 Career Development Model for Healthcare Professionals

The career development model for healthcare professionals refers to a model that describes the phased characteristics and laws of professional growth and development throughout the entire career journey of healthcare professionals, from entering the workplace to retirement. These models typically encompass stages such as entry, growth, maturity, and decline, each with its specific developmental tasks and challenges. For instance, newly hired healthcare professionals may need standardized training to enhance their clinical skills, while those in the growth stage may face decisions related to career choices and specialized development. Effective career development models can assist healthcare professionals in better planning their careers and also provide references for medical institutions in cultivating and utilizing talent.

## 2.3 Career Planning and Management Theory

Career planning and management theory involves how to achieve the common development of individuals and organizations through planning and designing individual career paths. These theories posit that career planning is not only a process of individual self-realization but also a process of optimizing human resource allocation and enhancing organizational competitiveness. Career planning and management encompass various aspects, including career goal setting, career path selection, career development opportunity provision, and career counseling. In the healthcare industry, due to its professionalism and complexity, career planning and management are particularly crucial. Medical institutions need to employ effective career planning and management to help healthcare professionals achieve career growth while also ensuring continuous improvement in medical service quality and efficiency.

# 3 Analysis of the Characteristics of Healthcare Professionals' Career Life cycles

## 3.1 Division of Career Stages for Healthcare Professionals

The division of career stages for healthcare professionals is usually closely related to their professional growth, skill accumulation, and role transitions. According to life cycle theory, the career life cycle of healthcare professionals can be broadly divided into four stages: the entry and basic training stage, the professional growth and skill enhancement stage, the career maturity and leadership development stage, and the career decline and retirement preparation stage. Each stage has its specific

developmental tasks and challenges.

(1) **Entry and Basic Training Stage:** Corresponding to the beginning of a career, the focus is on completing the transition from medical students to healthcare professionals, including learning basic skills, cultivating professional ethics, and accumulating clinical experience.

(2) **Professional Growth and Skill Enhancement Stage:** At this stage, healthcare professionals begin to delve into specialized fields, enhance diagnostic and treatment skills, engage in academic research, and may undertake teaching and mentoring duties.

(3) **Career Maturity and Leadership Development Stage:** Healthcare professionals reach the peak of their careers at this stage, possessing not only high-level medical skills but also potentially holding management positions in hospitals, responsible for team leadership and decision-making.

(4) **Career Decline and Retirement Preparation Stage:** As they age, healthcare professionals may gradually reduce their workload, start planning for retirement, and focus on transmitting experience and making professional transitions.

## 3.2 Characteristics and Needs at Each Stage

The characteristics and needs of each career stage vary, posing different requirements for the career planning and management of healthcare professionals.

(1) **Entry and Basic Training Stage:** Newly hired healthcare professionals need clear guidance and support to quickly adapt to the hospital environment and work requirements. They require systematic training, mentorship from senior physicians, and continuous learning resources.

(2) **Professional Growth and Skill Enhancement Stage:** At this stage, healthcare professionals strive for professional advancement and personal brand building. They need opportunities to participate in professional seminars and academic exchanges, as well as funding support for professional development and research.

(3) **Career Maturity and Leadership Development Stage:** Healthcare professionals at this stage expect to gain more leadership and decision-making powers. They require leadership training, assignment of management responsibilities, and opportunities to participate in hospital strategic planning.

(4) **Career Decline and Retirement Preparation Stage:** As retirement approaches, healthcare professionals focus on building their professional legacy and ensuring a smooth transition in personal life. They need retirement planning guidance, platforms for transmitting work experience, and continued professional respect.

## 3.3 Factors Influencing the Career Development of Medical Talents

The career development of medical talents is influenced by various factors, including personal factors, organizational environment, industry dynamics, and policy orientation.

(1) **Personal Factors:** These include the educational background, career interests, work motivation, and family situation of medical talents, which directly affect their career choices and development paths.

(2) **Organizational Environment:** The culture, management style, resource allocation, and promotion mechanisms of hospitals have a direct impact on the career development of medical talents.

(3) **Industry Dynamics:** Trends in the medical industry, technological innovations, and policy changes all influence the

career development of medical talents.

(4) Policy Orientation: Government medical policies, healthcare systems, continuing education and training policies, etc., provide external conditions and support for the career development of medical talents.

## 4 Current Situation and Challenges of Career Planning for Medical Talents

### 4.1 Practices of Current Career Planning for Medical Talents

Currently, the practice of career planning for medical talents in Liannan County Hospital mainly focuses on basic training for newly hired medical talents and continuing education for in-service medical talents. The hospital provides systematic induction training for newly hired medical talents, covering hospital culture, rules and regulations, basic skills, etc., to help them quickly adapt to the hospital environment. At the same time, the hospital also encourages in-service medical talents to participate in various academic conferences and training courses to update their professional knowledge and skills. However, these plans often lack targeted and systematic approaches, paying insufficient attention to the specific needs of medical talents at different career stages, and the design of career development paths is relatively monotonous, lacking flexibility and personalized consideration.

### 4.2 Challenges and Issues Faced

The challenges faced by Liannan County Hospital in career planning for medical talents mainly include talent loss, unclear career development paths, and limited training resources. Firstly, due to its remote location and relatively poor economic conditions, the hospital finds it difficult to attract and retain high-quality medical talents, especially young doctors and nurses. Secondly, medical talents lack a clear career development path and lack clear guidance and expectations on how to advance from junior to middle and senior positions, leading some medical talents to feel uncertain about their future development. In addition, the hospital's training resources are limited, unable to meet the needs of all medical talents for professional development and skill enhancement, especially in the training of emerging medical technologies and management capabilities.

### 4.3 Improvement Directions Based on Life Cycle Theory

In response to the above challenges, Liannan County Hospital can improve the career planning of medical talents based on life cycle theory. Firstly, the hospital should design personalized career development plans according to the different career stages of medical talents, such as providing more practical opportunities and guidance for newly hired medical talents, offering opportunities for professional further study and management training for middle-aged and young medical talents, and providing career inheritance and psychological counseling support for medical talents nearing retirement. Secondly, the hospital should establish clearer career promotion paths and evaluation systems so that medical talents can clearly see the direction and possibilities for personal development. Furthermore, the hospital can collaborate with external medical institutions and medical schools to introduce more training resources and learning opportunities, especially for training in emerging medical technologies and management capabilities, to

meet the development needs of medical talents at different career stages. Through these measures, the hospital can not only enhance the job satisfaction and loyalty of medical talents but also improve the overall quality and efficiency of medical services.

## 5 Empirical Research on Career Planning and Management of Medical Talents

### 5.1 Research Process

This study adopts a qualitative research method to gain in-depth insights and understand the actual situation of career planning and management for medical talents. The primary data for the study comes from semi-structured interviews with Liannan County Hospital, focusing on their career experiences, career development needs, satisfaction with current career planning, and suggestions and expectations. Additionally, relevant documents such as the hospital's human resource management policy documents, training manuals, and career development path maps were collected. Through these first-hand materials, the study aims to reveal the problems and challenges faced by medical talents in career planning and management, as well as their expectations for career development.

### 5.2 Case Study Based on Liannan County Hospital

As the case study for this research, Liannan County Hospital exemplifies the typical characteristics of career development for medical talents in rural areas. Through interviews with medical talents at the hospital, the study found that although the hospital provides certain career development opportunities, such as regular training and continuing education, there are still some issues. Firstly, the career development path is not clear enough, lacking targeted career planning and personalized development plans. Secondly, medical talents generally feel that career advancement opportunities are limited, especially for mid-to-high-level positions. Additionally, young medical talents have a strong demand for professional growth and skill enhancement, but the existing training resources and learning opportunities cannot fully meet their needs. The case study also indicates that the hospital's geographical location and economic conditions have a certain impact on the recruitment and retention of medical talents.

### 5.3 Evaluation of the Implementation Effect of Career Planning for Medical Talents

When assessing the implementation effect of career planning for medical talents at Liannan County Hospital, the study focused on three dimensions: job satisfaction, perception of career growth, and willingness to stay. Through interviews, the study found that despite the hospital's efforts in career planning, there is still room for improvement in meeting the personalized needs of medical talents and providing a clear career development path. Medical talents generally hope for more opportunities to participate in decision-making and career development, as well as more systematic training and learning resources. Furthermore, the study also found that the hospital's culture and work environment have a significant impact on the job satisfaction and willingness to stay of medical talents. A positive and supportive work environment can enhance the work enthusiasm and loyalty of medical talents. Therefore, to improve the effectiveness of career planning, the

hospital needs to take measures in multiple aspects, including improving the management system, increasing training resources, and providing career development support.

## 6 Strategic Suggestions for Career Planning and Management of Medical Talents

### 6.1 Management Strategies for Different Career Stages

Based on the characteristics and needs of medical talents at different career stages, Liannan County Hospital should implement differentiated management strategies. For medical talents in the entry and basic training stage, the hospital should establish a sound mentoring system, with one-on-one guidance from senior physicians, to help newcomers quickly adapt to the work environment and improve their clinical skills. In the professional growth and skill enhancement stage, the hospital can set up special funds to encourage medical talents to participate in academic exchanges and scientific research projects, providing opportunities for further study and visiting learning to promote their professional skills. For medical talents in the career maturity and leadership development stage, the hospital should provide management training and establish leadership development plans, providing them with more opportunities for decision-making participation and team management. In the career decline and retirement preparation stage, the hospital should pay attention to the physical and mental health of medical talents, providing flexible work arrangements and retirement planning guidance. At the same time, a knowledge transfer mechanism should be established to encourage them to share their experience with younger medical talents.

### 6.2 Organizational Policies to Promote the Career Development of Medical Talents

To promote the career development of medical talents, Liannan County Hospital needs to formulate and implement a series

of organizational policies. Firstly, the hospital should clarify the career development path and provide clear promotion channels and standards for medical talents. Secondly, the hospital should establish a performance evaluation system to ensure that the evaluation of medical talents is fair and transparent, and combined with personal development and incentives. Additionally, the hospital should strengthen cooperation with medical schools and research institutions to provide more learning and research opportunities for medical talents. At the same time, the hospital should also focus on the continuing education of medical talents, regularly organizing professional training and skill enhancement courses to meet the development needs of the medical industry. Through these policies, the hospital can provide comprehensive career development support for medical talents, stimulate their potential, and enhance their professional competitiveness.

### 6.3 Strategies to Improve Job Satisfaction and Loyalty of Medical Talents

Improving the job satisfaction and loyalty of medical talents is crucial for the long-term development of the hospital. Liannan County Hospital can achieve this goal through the following strategies: Firstly, the hospital should improve the work environment, provide better work facilities and conditions, and reduce the work pressure on medical talents. Secondly, the hospital should strengthen internal communication and establish an open feedback mechanism, so that medical talents feel that their voices are heard and valued. Additionally, the hospital can enhance the sense of belonging and satisfaction of medical talents by providing competitive compensation and benefits and establishing employee recognition programs. At the same time, the hospital should also pay attention to the work-life balance of medical talents, providing flexible work arrangements and sufficient rest time. Through these strategies, the hospital can improve the job satisfaction of medical talents, enhance their loyalty to the hospital, and thereby promote the stable development of the hospital.

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