

Effective leadership strategies in healthcare: A narrative review



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Abstract Effective healthcare leadership is essential for ensuring high-quality patient care, enhancing organizational performance, and fostering the professional development of healthcare professionals. This paper seeks to review some of the different approaches and styles of healthcare leadership basing information on 12 relevant and up-to-date literature sources. The different leadership styles that emerged from the literature include opinion leadership, ethical leadership, authentic leadership, servant leadership, distributed leadership, situational leadership, transformational leadership, and digital leadership. In addition, clinical leadership and the role of innovation in healthcare leadership are discussed within the paper. The key point of the main conclusion shows that it is necessary to have adaptive strategies in healthcare leadership in relation to the possible rise of issues in the healthcare sector. The review also outlines the criticality of patient-centered leadership in creating effective healthcare interactions and organizational effectiveness. The literature captures leadership practices of effective communication, motivation, and team building. All these three form the core of patient-centered care. In conclusion, this research is emphasizing on leadership importance in healthcare while indicating its ways of implementations. Flexible and patient-centered leaders in health are important to address needs within a complex, dynamic health care system and bring change for better delivery of health care and health outcomes. Therefore, the findings from this review imply that adaptive leadership competencies among healthcare professionals should be developed to a higher level as it meets the unprecedented challenges and demands of the industry. Consequently, effective health care leadership practice will ensure optimal patient care, organizational performance, and a healthy and vibrant health care workforce.

Keywords: teamwork, organisational roles, quality healthcare, problem-solving

1. Introduction

The act of directing the actions of a team towards a shared goal is referred to as leadership. In charge of overseeing group operations and managing change are the primary duties of the leadership role (Sfantou et al., 2017). The capacity to lead, motivate, and influence people towards shared objectives is known as leadership. High standards in teaching, research, and clinical practice must be attained to ensure the success of effective leadership, a difficult and highly esteemed component of healthcare education (Alkahtani, 2015). Effective leaders customize their management style on the best of the scenario, available resources, personnel skill level, and task at hand (Al-Thawabiyah et al., 2023). The effectiveness and efficiency of healthcare systems must be improved and enhanced through competent leadership (Belhiti et al., 2018). In a setting of effective leadership, in which the leader was able to raise team members' awareness of membership and performance, healthcare professionals increased compliance with daily tasks (Bhulani et al., 2020). The main factor in increasing organizational productivity in the medical field is leadership style. Healthcare organizations need a range of leadership philosophies to function effectively and advance the healthcare sector, placing their trust in qualified leaders with the capacity for innovative and dynamic thought (*Burnout and Leadership Style in Behavioral Health Care: A Literature Review | The Journal of Behavioral Health Services & Research*, n.d.). If services and their integration are improved, competent leaders and managers of healthcare professionals are required (Cardiff et al., 2018). The managers stressed the need or caring and expressive leadership and highlighted the need to approach the subject of what defines effective leadership with thoughtfulness (Cummings et al., 2021).

In contrast to the traditional model of care leadership, which emphasizes individual competence, disciplinary separation, and competitiveness, interprofessional team leadership places a strong emphasis on interpersonal relationships, member familiarity, and complicated environmental evaluation (Hu & Broome, 2020). Collaboration among leaders may enhance patient experience and safety, increase healthcare quality, and foster a culture of autonomy, responsibility, and well-being for staff (Silva et al., 2022). Leadership is not dependent on administrative duties and hierarchical rank; rather, leaders must learn to coordinate and manage the many personality types in their team, paying particular attention to passive-aggressive behavior (Vender, 2015). Leadership is the skill of persuading others to collaborate toward a shared goal. Therefore, the leader is both



the action's inspiration and direction (Alkahtani, 2015). Leadership is a power exchange between those who lead and those who wish to see actual changes and results that correspond to their common goals. Leadership style refers to how a leader sets direction, inspires followers, and carries out plans. Nurse leaders use a range of leadership styles to manage the nursing staff in healthcare facilities. They are situational, charismatic, visionary, coaching, laissez-faire, transactional, autocratic, democratic, bureaucratic, laissez-faire, charismatic, visionary, and transformational (Gashaye et al., 2023). In view of this, studies have demonstrated that leadership in the health care industry typically comprises a number of leaders from various professional groups at the top and intermediate levels of organizations, whose activities are both facilitated and hindered by their organizational settings (Nzinga et al., 2018).

A diverse range of talent is needed for leadership, and some leadership philosophies may be more effective than others depending on the circumstances. Fortunately, there are just a few talents that medical leaders need to acquire to successfully encourage the passion and professional fulfillment of doctors and other highly skilled professionals, and these skills do not depend on charm or a particular personality (Shanafelt et al., 2021). Leadership also needs an understanding of how one's actions influence other people and how looking after oneself helps resilience to last over time. According to research, being person-centered in thought and action, being a genuine existence at the front lines and an apparent champion of improvement, remaining focused on the objective and the strategy, being open and honest about outcomes, progress, goals, and flaws, promoting and engaging in systematic thinking, and working together across boundaries are all high impact behaviors (Graham & Woodhead, 2021). Providing leaders with skills that support good behavior, including enhancing the caliber of performance improvement efforts and leadership style, may ultimately lead to increased professional growth (Pidgeon, 2017). The objective of this topic is to explore and analyze various effective leadership strategies in the healthcare industry.

2. Methods

While this comprehensive literature search was being conducted, PubMed, Scopus, and Google Scholar were used as databases. The articles published between 2000 and 2023 were studied via the following search terms: ["leadership" OR "healthcare" OR "effective" OR "teamwork" OR "strategies" OR "patient centered"] AND ["problem solving" OR "ethical" OR "innovation" OR "emotional intelligence" OR "clinical"]. The systematic literature review process identified a total of 1,899 initial results across all database searches. Through careful screening, 909 duplicate entries were first removed from the dataset. Further refinement through title and abstract screening led to the elimination of an additional 131 articles. From the remaining pool of articles, 45 were identified as useful for the study, and after thorough evaluation, 12 articles were ultimately selected a valuable enough for the final review, as detailed in table 1, with the complete systematic assessment process documented in figure 1.

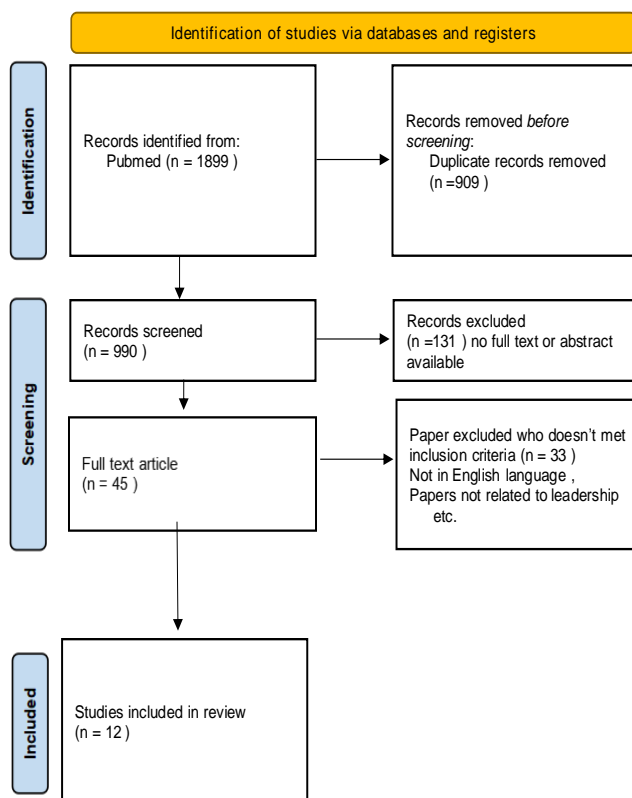


Figure 1 Prisma flowchart.



3. Results

Understanding the different types and qualities that shape successful leadership is essential. Leadership isn't a one-size-fits-all concept; it involves a range of strategies and traits that can be tailored to specific situations and needs. This review explores the varied world of leadership, examining the types and key characteristics that help build effective leadership practices. By focusing on these elements, we can better navigate the complexities of leadership roles, fostering the qualities needed to inspire and guide others toward shared goals and aspirations.

4. Discussion

4.1. Leadership styles

4.1.1. Opinion leadership styles

Since informal opinion leadership has recently become more prevalent in medical settings, the conventional notion of leadership has changed. This leadership tactic gives an informal leader—an "opinion leader"—with a foundation in education and behavior appropriate for the job. Its goal is to set up the most effective medical procedures while forming a team that becomes more accustomed to working together (Restivo et al., 2022). Example: A team leader who shares knowledge and experiences to guide and inspire team members. Different advantages and disadvantages of different leadership styles are shown in table 2.

Table 1 Articles included in this review.

Sr no	Name of author	Year	Methods	Conclusion	Key Findings
1.	Kumar D, et al (Kumar, 2022).	2022	Psychological assessment, such as the Myers-Brigg Type Indicator. leadership that is transactional.	In healthcare environments, effective leadership is essential.	Clinicians are not participating enough in quality improvement. Professionals in the healthcare field are resistant to change.
2.	Bhulani N, et al (Bhulani et al., 2020).	2020	Bibliometric research independent reviewers who are impartial read abstracts.	Identified gaps in the literature on healthcare leadership development.	Articles with a teamwork, quality control, and healthcare delivery theme. Articles focused on critical care medicine, academic medicine, and nursing.
3.	Gulati K, et al (Gulati et al., 2020).	2020	Conducted study on the leadership skills of Indian doctors.	In the Indian healthcare system, there is a leadership capability gap.	The paper discusses the challenges and importance of leadership development in the healthcare sector, particularly in resource-limited environments.
4.	van Diggele, et al. (van Diggele et al., 2020).	2020	This paper examines leadership roles and skills in the context of healthcare education, as well as a brief review of the contemporary conception of leadership.	Effective leadership needs respectful, honest interaction which respects the opinions and accomplishments of others.	Leadership responsibilities don't always correspond with titles modern leaders need to take initiative, work with others, and contribute. They should also be team players who respect and seek out the perspectives of others.
5.	Alison Brwon, (Brown, 2020).	2020	Eight Australian public hospitals were the focus of a comparative case study that included observations, interviews, and document review. A	Effective leadership on healthcare excellence and quality improvement promotes effective meeting processes, fostering governance engagement and facilitating valuable reflexivity at the governance level.	Effective communication and leadership are crucial for influencing healthcare quality governance, with clear narratives, open communication, effective questioning and board member challenges influencing engagement.



			thematic analysis was conducted to investigate how leadership and communication impact healthcare governance.		
6.	Sabbah et al. (Sabbah et al., 2020).	2020	A validated survey was conducted to investigate the prevalence of leadership styles and transformational leadership abilities.	The study analyzed leadership styles and transformational skills among nurse leaders in Qatar, revealing transformational leadership as the most commonly exhibited style.	This study suggests that to increase the number of nursing leaders who become transformational leaders, especially head nurses and to enhance transformational leadership abilities across the board for all nursing staff members, a development roadmap is needed.
7.	Minutolo et al. (Restivo et al., 2022).	2022	Significant findings on leadership effectiveness were obtained from cross-sectional research.	The meta-analysis provides the first data on leadership effectiveness in healthcare settings, suggesting a standardized leadership program for surgical settings to refine worker performance and guideline adherence.	Cross-sectional studies gave significant results on leadership effectiveness, necessitating the need for additional study designs, particularly those with high evidence levels, like trials.
8.	Stein Backes et al. (Stein Backes et al., 2022).	2022	The article uses a theoretical-reflexive approach, building upon the complexity thinking model.	This study highlights the importance of horizontal, prospective, and evolutionary leadership without minimizing the need for interprofessional disagreement, disorder, or disorder—all of which are essential for evolution.	Complex-systemic thinking is important because it addresses and suggests potential leadership tactics by giving priority to relationships, interactions, and systemic associations.
9.	Cummings et al. (Cummings et al., 2021).	2021	conducted a systematic review including a total of nine electronic databases.	The intentional development of nursing leadership skills will contribute to the preparation of future nurses for the demands of a pressured healthcare system.	The findings of this review show that focused educational interventions are a successful strategy for helping nurses build their leadership skills.
10.	Kelly et al. (<i>Burnout and Leadership Style in Behavioral Health Care: A Literature Review The Journal of Behavioral Health Services & Research</i> , n.d.).	2020	A literature review was conducted using five electronic databases between November and December 2017 to identify studies on leadership style and employee burnout in behavioral health care organizations.	The review's conclusions offer prospective strategies for preventing employee burnout and the associated expenses, as well as suggestions on how to develop this important field of study in the future.	Behavioral health professionals in healthcare settings have unique challenges that make burnout a greater possibility to occur.
11.	Laukka et al. (Laukka et al., 2022).	2022	MEDLINE (Ovid), Scopus, CINAHL (EBSCO), and ProQuest (ABI/INFORM) were all the databases searched.	The term "e-leadership" needs to be used more frequently in nursing practice and research, according to the findings.	The behavior, roles, and traits of leaders were referred to as leadership attributes. Initial requirements included education and knowledge of the complexities of healthcare systems.



12.	Harris J, et al. (Fond et al., 2013).	2018	A case study methodology. analyzing leadership philosophies critically.	The article discusses the importance of effective leadership in healthcare.	The identification and criticism of ineffective leadership philosophies.
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4.2. Ethical leadership styles

An ethical leader helps team members' mental health by giving them fulfilling jobs and connecting their self-concept to the organization's greater moral goals (Jian et al., 2022). Instead of acting out of self-related interest, an ethical leader is guided by a system of widely recognized ideas and acceptable judgments, which is advantageous for followers, organizations, and society. The definition of ethical leadership involves "demonstrating ethical behavior through one's own actions, relationships with others, and the promotion of such behavior's to followers through conversation in both directions, reinforcement, and decision making" (Ali Awad & Al-anwer Ashour, 2022). Example: The ethical leader serves as a role model and inspires others to act ethically in their own roles and responsibilities.

4.3. Authentic leadership

When individuals perform honestly, truly and authentically, this leadership is called an authentic leadership style (Leroy et al., 2015). The definition of an authentic leader is "a person who has knowledge of oneself, knows his behavior, his ethical principles as well as an understanding of his own traits of others, and shares a concern for everyone's welfare" (Mondini et al., 2020). Example: An authentic leader leads with empathy, and compassion and inspires others through their authenticity.

4.4. Servant leadership

The leader prioritizes the needs of others before their own in a servant leadership style. By prioritizing others' needs and fostering an environment that fosters followers' growth, servant leader distribute knowledge and authority (Maglione & Neville, 2021). By balancing the resources and responsibilities of their duties, leaders are responsible for the welfare of their subordinates. Servant leaders place greater emphasis on one-on-one engagement with followers (Belrhiti et al., 2018). Example: This type of leader actively listens to their team, empathizes with their challenges and works collaboratively to find solutions.

4.5. Distributed leadership

Owing to the peculiarities of operations at different stages, leaders and employees can switch positions, and people with a range of expertise and abilities can quickly step in and replace leadership responsibilities, which is what is meant by distributed leadership (Moon et al., 2019). In a constellation known as distributed leadership, each member has a unique function while cooperating with the others. It provides a thorough knowledge of leadership as the outcome of those who lead and those who follow share performance in a group context. It also provides a dynamic, nonlinear concept of how people and events connect in organizations. We utilize distributed leadership to define the leadership process as a collaboration of accepted meaning and action to achieve shared goals (Nzinga et al., 2018). Example: A project team where each member takes on leadership roles and contributes their expertise in different areas.

4.6. Situational leadership

SLP theory states that while choosing how to lead, leaders should consider the team members' degrees of development, readiness, and current skills. When unusual working conditions, staff unease, and option value are present, situational leadership is an effective leadership approach that hospital academic administrators can use to take the lead in urgent circumstances. This is especially true when faculty/staff redeployment is involved (Nonailada & Martin, 2022). Example: A manager adjusts his or her leadership style depending on the skill level and motivation of his or her employees.

4.7. Transformational leadership

To increase comprehension of the importance of the tasks accomplished and the caliber of the work produced, as well as to defend the organization's purpose and accomplish of its goals, the leader pushes for a set of transformational behaviors over his followers (Ferreira et al., 2020). Transformational leadership [(TL)] is one of the most effective leadership theories in the healthcare services sector. By empowering employees, challenging them to go beyond the status quo, and considering their needs and inspirations, a leader in TL may mobilize followers' incentives toward an organizational objective. As a partnership, "leaders and those who follow inspire themselves to greater standards of motivation and morality" (Moon et al., 2019). Example: A CEO who has a compelling vision for the company and effectively communicates it to employees.

4.8. Clinical leadership

We have observed an increasing pattern in the past three decades where health systems worldwide have put considerable effort and resources into enhancing "clinical leadership." Clinical leadership refers to leadership provided by medical professionals such as physicians and nurses. Clinical leadership now includes anybody who has received training to provide front-line care (Mrayyan et al., 2023). Example: A nursing manager who actively engages with their team on the front lines of patient care.

4.9. Innovative leadership in healthcare

Innovation is "a broad range of tasks involving the development and application of ideas or items that are novel to an organization" (Weintraub & McKee, 2018). An organization's ability to innovate helps it remain competitive and flexible. In addition to new ways of thinking, innovation is dangerous (Snow, 2019). Example: A hospital administrator who embraces technology and seeks out innovative solutions to improve patient care and operational efficiency.

4.10. Patient-centered leadership

Patient-centered leadership is an approach to leadership within healthcare organizations that focuses on the requirements, interests, and overall experiences of patients. Although patient-centered practices promote healthy relationships and receive greater focus in nursing and healthcare, little is known about how they affect leadership practices (Cardiff et al., 2018). Example: A leader ensures that the healthcare team actively listens to patients, respects their autonomy and involves them in the decision making process regarding their care.

4.11. Digital leadership

In the process of digital transformation, digital leadership is defined in terms of system effectiveness. This concept is a direct weighted relationship that prioritizes efficiency, adaptability, and time management. A digital leader is a facilitator who can develop a meaningful and concise strategy and implement tactics for the digital transformation process (Türk, 2023). For example, digital leaders encourage their team to embrace digital tools and platforms for collaboration and communication.

Table 2 An overview of the advantages and disadvantages associated with various leadership styles.

Leadership Styles	Advantages	Disadvantages
Opinion leadership (Restivo et al., 2022)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Influence and persuasion 2. Trust and Credibility 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Limited Reach 2. Resistance to change
Ethical leadership (Maglione & Neville, 2021)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increases followers' confidence and trustworthiness. 2. Puts employees' well-being first, which raises morale and increases retention. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Resolves ethical issues in a complicated manner. 2. May experience decision-making paralysis due to conflicting priorities.
Authentic leadership (Leroy et al., 2015)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Builds trust and credibility through genuine and transparent behavior. 2. Inspires motivation and commitment by serving as a role model for authenticity. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Could be seen as not having enough power or being aggressive while making decisions. 2. Demands constant reflection and self-awareness, which may be laborious and time-consuming.
Servant leadership (Maglione & Neville, 2021)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fosters a supportive and empowering work environment. 2. Establish solid bonds of respect and trust with others. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Might be seen as being ineffectual or passive while making decisions. 2. Might lead to the leader putting others' needs and well-being ahead of their own.
Distributed leadership (Xu et al., 2021)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Encourages collaboration and teamwork among team members. 2. Promotes shared responsibility and ownership of tasks and projects. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Requires effective communication and coordination among team members. 2. Might lead to disputes or confrontations over direction and decision-making.
Situational leadership (Mrayyan et al., 2023)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Situational leadership helps leaders to adjust their approach to leadership in accordance with the situation. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Time-consuming: It may take more time and effort to assess situational circumstances and modify leadership approaches. 2. Inconsistency: Continually modifying a leader's approach might cause followers to



	2. It encourages trust and understanding between leaders and followers by facilitating open dialog and criticism.	become confused or inconsistent, which lowers morale and decreases production.
Transformational leadership (Ferreira et al., 2020)	1. Develop future leaders through mentorship and empowerment. 2. Encourages and inspires workers to attain greater performance standards.	1. Employee resistance to change because they could feel overtaken by the high standards and continuous innovation. 2. Absence of attention to normal duties and operational effectiveness, which might result in their being neglected.
Clinical leadership (Mrayyan et al., 2023)	1. Enhances patient care outcomes through effective coordination and management. 2. Improves communication and collaboration among healthcare team members.	1. Requires time and resources to develop leadership skills and competencies. 2. Requires ongoing support and training to sustain effective clinical leadership practices.
Innovative leadership (Weintraub & McKee, 2018)	1. Encourages ongoing development and adjustment to evolving healthcare requirements. 2. Encourages a culture of innovation and problem-solving among medical personnel.	1. Takes a large time, effort, and money commitment to accomplish. 2. Discuss the dangers connected to implementing new methods or technology.
Patient-centered leadership (Cardiff et al., 2018).	1. Improved patient satisfaction. 2. Enhanced quality of care.	1. Time Consuming. 2. Difficulty in measuring outcomes.

5. Emotional Intelligence

It is one of the key characteristics of effective leadership. This includes noticing one's own emotions, thoughts, and opinions as well as those of others and being able to recognize differences between them to use this information to make informed decisions. The ability to utilize, comprehend, and control one's emotions for one's own and other people's good is a trait of those with high emotional intelligence. "Emotional intelligence" [(EI)] is one of the terms from psychology that is most frequently used in daily speech, yet there is much debate concerning its construct, variation, and predictive value. Whatever the debate, there is no denying that the emotional competencies that make up the EI construct—recognizing one's own and other people's reactions, through feelings to guide thought and behavior, realizing that emotions influence behavior, and emotion regulation—have a crucial impact on important social and personal outcomes (Jiménez-Picón et al., 2021).

5.1. Advantages of the EI

- 1. Enhances self-awareness and understanding of one's own emotions.
- 2. Assists in stress management and resiliently navigating difficult circumstances.

5.2. Disadvantages of EI

- 1. This may result in emotional manipulation or the exploitation of other people's feelings for one's own advantage.
- 2. This may lead to an excessive amount of empathy for the feelings of others, which might cause emotional tiredness or burnout (Jiménez-Picón et al., 2021).

5.3. Importance of EI in effective leadership

Effective leadership requires emotional intelligence because it allows leaders to understand and manage their own emotions while making decisions and inspiring and motivating others toward common goals through effective communication and relationship-building. EI fosters cohesive teams, fosters a positive work environment, and enhances decision-making, ultimately driving organizational success (Jiménez-Picón et al., 2021).

6. Implications For Practice

First, good communication emerges as the foundation, creating clarity, openness, and trust among teams, Leaders who can articulate visions, objectives, and expectations foster an environment of mutual understanding and collaboration. Motivation, praised as a motivator for work efficiency and participation, takes priority. Leaders who are capable of inspiring and empowering others to manage obstacles while cultivating a tough and innovative culture. Furthermore, the art of gratitude has emerged as a powerful instrument for increasing staff morale and dedication. Recognizing and celebrating accomplishments, both majorly and minorly, not only boosts individual confidence, but it also fosters a sense of loyalty and



belonging among teammates. Visionary leadership, defined by vision and agility, leads organisations toward long-term progress in dynamic market environments. Leaders who see the future, predict trends, and embrace change instill confidence and guide their teams to strategic success. Creating a real team atmosphere requires encouraging cooperation, inclusion, and friendship among team members. Leaders who excel in assembling cohesive teams use multiple abilities and views, cultivating an ecosystem conducive to creativity and innovation. Furthermore, the need to surround oneself with people who complement one's abilities emphasizes the need for sincerity and awareness of oneself in leadership. Leaders who recognize their limits and aggressively seek broad skills empower their teams with a strong skill set that is ready to confront multifarious situations. In summary, accepting these implications for action enables leaders to manage difficulties with ease, develop vibrant organizational cultures, and push their teams toward long-term excellence and success. In short, a leader must communicate effectively, motivate others, praise employees, be visionary, develop a true team environment, and surround themselves with individuals who complement each other and their skills.

7. Conclusion

Healthcare leadership requires adaptable approaches and abilities. This comprises situational and dispersed methods, authentic and servant leadership, and opinion and ethical leadership. High standards are inspired by transformational leadership, and emotional intelligence is essential. Leadership that is creative and clinical is essential. Patient-centered leadership improves interactions in the healthcare industry, influencing both organizations and patient care.

Ethical Considerations

The review follows the highest standards for ethical research and guarantees transparency and fairness in the analyses of leadership strategies and styles in health care.

Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest has been found during the conduct of this review. The authors declared that no personal or financial interests could have affected the findings.

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