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**INTERNAL MARKETING PRACTICES IN PUBLIC HEALTH CARE SERVICE ORGANIZATION: In  
the case of Referral Hospitals in Amhara Region, Ethiopia**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The aim of this article is assessing the current level of internal marketing practices of the public health care service organization specifically the referral hospitals which located in Amhara region, Ethiopia. The study is cross sectional / survey study design. An explanatory approach is also adopted, involving correlation of the professional group differences on their perception of internal marketing practices of the hospitals. Multilevel sampling was used to select three referral hospitals and 400 professional respondents from the selected hospitals. The data was collected by using self administered questionnaire. The data that collected in the above mentioned method were analyzed by descriptive statistics and the perception difference of professional group was evaluated by one way analysis of variance. The finding revealed that the public health care service organization internal marketing practices are below average level. And all group of professional have different perception about the practice of the hospitals.*

**Key words:** Internal marketing, Public, Communication, Training, Development, Reward, management

## **Introduction**

The age of service as a separate sector is short comparing to life of agriculture and industrial sector. Service sector development goes through the development of the country. Hence marketing in its modern form first took root in those manufacturing and Agriculture sectors. Today, service sector become cover the significant share of a countries' economy in terms of GDP and employment. World Bank statistics show that service sector coverage becomes in progress both in developing and developed countries, For instance in many Latin American and Caribbean nations the service sector accounts for more than half the gross national product (GNP) and employs more than half the labor force. In Ethiopia, out of the total 10.3% GDP growth of half 5.3% contributed from the service sector World Bank(2015).

In the public sector much of the marketing related activity is concerned with the satisfaction of customers despite the fact that frequently there is no direct or even indirect form of competition (Walsh, 1994).He also stated that as management has grown in the public sector, that marketing has begun to attract more general attention, and to be considered in relation to core public services, such as health and education.

Traditional view of marketing focused on external customer rather than paying attention to the organization employees. Many scholars (Lewis (2005); Aburoub, Hersh & adwan(2011))believed that the contribution of people in service organization is vital; however, the internal customer (employee) recognition is understated in developing countries' service delivery organization. According to Barzoki & Ghujali (2013) employee need and its satisfaction is a means of the improvement of service quality and bases of the overall marketing as well as organization success. Chi.et.al (2008) also stated that in order to achieve organizational performance, the employees should be searching for improvement and motivational method. Some scholars for instance (Gronroos,2001; Rafiq & Ahmed, 2000) agreed that internal marketing have perspective of human resource management's activities, attract, select, train, encourage, and award in order to achieve the goal of customer-orientated marketing with service consciousness. In other side (Conduit & Mavondo, 2001; Hult et al., 2000; Lings, 2004) argued that internal marketing is integral activities of different departments and they stated that Internal marketing using total quality management concept, in different department emphasizing the management of internal procedures and the quality of service transmission, as well as treating employees as both suppliers and consumers.

Public Service provider organizations in Ethiopia have lead by customer focused strategy. But, many customers have complained about the quality of public service including health service. For instance Potluri and Mangnale(2010) identified that in the case of Ethiopian service sector employees have significant gap in terms of communication, service knowledge, interaction and problem solving ability. It shows that many of public service provider organization including health service which operates in Ethiopia have not given appropriate attention for the issue of employees and the issue is limited on the department of human resource management.

Human power is the backbone for the provision of quality health care for the population and high level of professional satisfaction among health workers earns high dividends such as higher worker force retention and patients satisfaction (Alemshet et.al 2011).

Despite major progresses have been made to improve the health status of the population in the last one and half decades, Ethiopia's population still faces a high rate and the health problem. The public health care provided by provider organizations suffered by shortage of skilled professionals, weak referral system at health centre levels, lack of inadequate availability of biomedical equipment, and under financing. Furthermore, in most of public service organizations including the health care service, the issue of employees is the task of human resource management department. Therefore Job satisfaction of employees understated, most employees have not interest to be concerned for the customer need. Hence they bypass this organization and go to traditional health treatments or private owned health service organization. Furthermore, there is limited amount of knowledge about public service marketing in general internal marketing in particular. By considering this gap the aim of this study is examining the level of internal marketing practices and evaluates its impact on employee job satisfaction, customer orientation and influences on service quality improvement.

### **Objectives**

- To examine the level of internal marketing practice prevailing in public health service organizations/referral Hospitals
- To evaluate the perception differences about internal marketing practices among different group of professionals.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Internal Marketing**

Internal marketing was first emerged in the literature of services marketing and then in service management and relationship marketing (Voima, 2000). According to Berry (1981) before the mature growth of the literature related to internal marketing little organization applied the concepts in their operation. However, they didn't give the term internal marketing Sasser and Arbeit's present about the concept in their article they wrote in 1976. When we see the evolution of the concept starts the implementation of internal marketing as a solution to the problem of inconsistent service delivery.

The thinking underlying internal marketing is that employees are viewed as internal customers and jobs as internal products. Job products must attract, develop and motivate employees thereby satisfying the needs and wants of these internal customers while addressing the overall objectives of the organization (Berry, 1981; Berry and Parasuraman, 1991). The successful service company must first sell the job to employees before it can sell its services to customers (Sasser, 1976)

Tansuhaj et al (1988) stated that in services marketing, the employee plays a central role in attracting, building and maintaining relationships with customers. The recognition of the central role of employees in service marketing has given rise to "internal marketing" programs strongly oriented to employee development. Employees who are satisfied will most likely have positive attitude towards work and excellent performance as it leads to greater attraction and retention of the best employees, which in turn significantly enhance the ability of the organization to deliver higher quality service to external customers (Berry, 1981, Berry and Parasuraman, 1991).

Human resource is imperative resource of the organization in general specifically the service organization in particular. Hence recognition of the importance and appropriate use of this resource is the key factors for their success. As cited by Anosike & Ahmed (2009); Arthur 1994; Heskett, et al 1997; Tsui, et al 1997 stated that the appropriate use of people enhances organizational effectiveness.

## **Hypothesis**

- H1. Professionals significantly differ in their perception about internal marketing practices in the Hospitals.
- H1a. Professionals significantly differ in their perception about internal communication practices of the Hospitals
- H1b. Professionals significantly differ in their perception about training practices of the Hospitals
- H1c. Professionals significantly differ in their perception about human resource development practices of the Hospitals
- H1d. Professionals significantly differ in their perception about reward related practice of the Hospitals
- H1e. Professionals significantly differ in their perception about the management support of the Hospitals.

## **Method**

### **Research design**

This study adopted Cross-sectional survey study design. An explanatory approach is also adopted, involving correlation analysis, to explain the relationship between the categorical group influences on the perception of professionals about the internal marketing practices of the hospitals.

The study involved self administered questionnaire for professional personnel employed from three referral hospitals. The survey took place in the Amhara region referral hospitals. A number of health centers and health posts are also present in the regional state the human resource number and professional composition are not sufficient to the study.

### **Sample and Sampling techniques**

A multi-stage sampling plan was used to select study area and respondents. Convenient sampling was employed for selecting the research sites referral hospitals while simple random sampling techniques were used for selecting the respondents among the professional employees of the selected hospitals. The sample size for professional respondents from each hospital was determined by using Taro Yamane's (1973) formula from the given population by taking into accounts 0.05 (5%) standard error or significant level.

$$S = N / (1 + Ne^2)$$

Where, **S**=sample size

**N**= population size

**e**= significance level or error of sampling

The total of 400 respondents selected from the total 1364 professional staff by considering 30% non responded rate because of the respondents work load and other characteristics of

professional respondents. After deciding the total sample size proportionally distributed for three conveniently selected hospitals.

**Table 1: Population and Sample size**

Name of hospitals	Total population	Sample size
Gondor Teaching and Referral Hospital	502 (excluded teaching service provider)	147
Felege Hiywot Referral Hospital	523	153
Debire Markos Zonal Referral hospital	339	100

Source: Human resource department of each hospital.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

The data that collected from professionals by self administered questionnaire were analyzed by descriptive statistics to assess the current level of practices of the hospitals. Confirmatory analysis was employed to evaluate the validity and reliability of the data and to check how much the selected construct (elements of internal marketing) measured Internal marketing of the organization and each variables measure constructs. One way ANOVA also applied to measure the perceptual difference that happened among different group of professionals (Physician, Nurses, laboratory technician and pharmacists) about the implementation of internal marketing practices in the hospital.

### **Analysis and Discussion**

This research used survey methodology to gain an understanding of how much internal marketing practiced in the public health service organization and evaluated the perception difference that have among the group of professional employees.

For this study 392 questionnaire were collected from the three hospitals' professionals. 24 of them rejected because of missing value. This makes the response rate of the study 92% .The questionnaire were consisted 44 items for internal marketing measurement. Based on the reliability test of the data to measure internal marketing practice constructs 33 items (9 item for internal communication,8 items for measuring training program,7 items for human resource development program,5 for measuring reward system and 6 for measuring the senior management support of the hospital) were selected.. For measuring the impact of employees group difference on their perception the employees categorizes in to four groups.

### **Reliability**

Reliability of the data was assessed by using Cronbach alpha test and inter item reliability by using SPSS 20. According to Nunnally & Bernstein 1994 the data is reliable when the alpha result exceeded than 0.7. As table shown that the items that designed to measure the five components of internal marketing which are (Communication, training. Human resource development and senior management support) are reliable the alpha result is 0.852, 0.948, 0.839, 0.815 and 0.855respectively. The item to total correlation result of each item in reliable

data above the threshold point 0.30 Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). Hence the item to total correlation of this data is above the threshold point.

**Demographic characteristics of the respondents**

The subject of this study was the health service professionals. The majority 59.2% of the respondents are male the remaining 40.8% participants are females. Concerning the age group of the respondents' majority of them lies on age group of 21-30 following to this 18.1% of them are between the age group of 31-40 and the remaining 9.4% are in the age group of above 40. Majority of participants 49.7% were nurses, next to this 19.7% of the respondents were laboratory technicians and the reaming 17.8% and 12.8% of respondents were physicians and pharmacists respectively. With regards to educational status of respondents majority 70% of them have first degree from the university, following this 18.3% have attended college TVET level Trainings the reaming 11.7% hold second degree. Concerning the work experiences majority 45.3% spent from 1-5 years in the same professional work; following to this near to one-fourth 24.7% of the respondents had worked in the same profession for 5-10 years the remaining 17.8% and 12.2% were spent less one year and greater than 10 years on the same professional work. With regard to the poison in the work place majority 96.9% involves as an expert only 3.1% involve in the management position.

**Internal marketing practices of the hospital (Descriptive Analysis)**

The respondent's perception was obtained through five-point (1-5) Likert scale questionnaire, where scale 1 signifies strongly disagrees and scale 5 shows strongly agree. The rating 'very high' denotes score of 4.0 and above, 'average' denotes score below 4.0 up to 3.0, and 'poor' or low denotes score below 3.0.

**Table 1. Internal communication**

No	Items	Mean	S.d	Strongly dis agree &Disagree		Strongly agree & Agree	
				N	%	N	%
	<b>Internal Communication</b> $\alpha = 0.852$						
1	Identification of each employee needs	2.09	1.158	251	69.7	41	11.4
2	inter department communication	2.95	1.185	145	40.3	156	43.3
3	I report my unit activity and customer relation in regular meeting	2.88	1.273	152	42.2	147	40.8
4	I can get information about the hospital easily	3.16	1.227	117	32.5	175	48.6
5	Two way communication of mgt with employee	2.76	1.259	165	45.8	134	37.2
6	I got my job description in different way	3.04	1.339	137	38.1	171	47.5
7	The management encourage interpersonal communication	2.86	1.216	148	41.1	135	37.5
8	I understand the hospital mission and vision	3.51	1.087	69	19.2	220	61.1
9	My supervisor inform me about before making any change	2.81	1.272	160	44.4	133	36.9
	<b>Grand mean</b>	<b>2.89</b>					

Source: Survey 2016

Table 2, shows the descriptive statistics of the perception of professional workers about the internal communication practices of the hospitals. From table 2, it can be seen that professionals' slightly agree above average level (the mean value 3.16, 3.04 and 3.51) only the three items of internal communication practices of the hospitals in terms of making information easily accessible for the employees, describing the employee job description by different media for them and informing the employees about mission and vision of the hospital respectively. The respondents agree below average level about most of internal communication practices items. The mean value these items ranges from 2.04- 2.95. Generally, it can be seen from table 1, that the extent of practice of internal communication in the hospitals was below average with mean values of 2.89.

**Table 3 . Training**

No	Items	Mean	S.d	Strongly dis agree &Disagree		Strongly agree & Agree	
	<b>Training</b> $\alpha = 0.948$						
14	The hospital facilitate sufficient training	1.79	1.062	264	73.3	32	8.9
15	The training facilitate by hospital fit to employees' needs	1.91	1.082	270	75.0	39	10.8
16	The training give me new skill and knowledge	2.14	1.195	238	66.1	65	18.1
17	Trainings facilitated by the hospital help me to improve ability to do my job	2.21	1.181	227	63.1	67	18.6
18	The training program conducted by the hospital helps me to be familiar to the emerged technology in the health service	2.06	1.151	247	68.6	49	13.6
19	The hospital conducted training sessions that helps me to understand current and future clients needs	2.14	1.141	239	66.4	59	16.4
20	The hospital arranges the off the job training outside the work environment	2.04	1.148	253	70.3	52	14.4
	<b>Grand mean</b>	2.04					

Table 3, has shown that training related practices of the hospital. This table shows that the hospitals give less attention for this practice. The mean value indicated between the range of 1.79 and 2.21 with the standard deviation range of 1.062-1,182 these shown that the homogeneity of the respondents perception in regard to training activities of the hospital. The grand mean (2.04) of seven items of training related activities also shown the hospital have given low level attention for the training.

**Table 3. Human resource development program**

No.	Items	Mean	Sd	Strongly disagree & disagree		Strongly agree & agree	
				N	%	0	0.0
	<b>Human Resource Development</b> $\alpha = 0.839$						
22	The hospital has well organized employees' career development plan	2.83	1.186	137	38.1	124	34.4
23	The hospital integrates the human resource development to organizational objectives	2.71	1.101	151	41.9	98	27.2
25	The hospital clearly identified career path for the professionals	3.02	1.188	108	30.0	147	40.8
27	Skill and knowledge development of employees are an ongoing process in our hospital	2.58	1.406	189	52.5	99	27.5
28	I have sufficient skill to utilize different biomedical instruments available in the hospital	2.91	1.299	149	41.4	148	41.1
29	The hospital HR Development plan meet with my personal need	2.43	1.161	195	54.2	64	17.8
30	I am given the chance to try out the skill obtained from the training immediately	2.69	1.379	167	46.4	89	24.7
	<b>Grand mean</b>	2.73					

Concerning to the human resource development program Table 3. Stated that the employees have least agreement about most of activities related to human resource development. The mean value of the response for the hospital employees' career plan is (2.83) with it is below average with the standard deviation of 1.186 it shown the homogeneity of the respondents in the three hospital. Not only this the respondents have lower agreement about the integration of human resource development objective with the entire organization objective, the progressiveness of employees' skills and knowledge development and the hospital human resource development plan match with individual employees need were below average the mean value were 2.71, 2.58 and 2.43 respectively with the standard deviation of 1.101 to 1.161 it shown that the similarity or have low variation in their perception. The only item which was the employees' were agreed slightly above average was the hospitals were clearly identify career path for the professional with the mean value of 3.02 and standard deviation of 1.188.

**Table 4. Reward**

	<b>Reward <math>\alpha = 0.815</math></b>			0	0.0	0	0.0
31	When I do something extraordinary I know that I will receive some financial bonus/reward	2.58	1.396	188	52.2	36	10.0
32	The hospital design monthly salary(my permanent income) and the annual increases closely to my qualifications and my performance	1.99	1.206	247	68.6	51	14.2
33	I got an annual bonus regardless of my performance	1.8	1.154	273	75.8	36	10.0
35	The hospital recognize and incentivized my individual efforts and achievements	2.36	1.34	217	60.3	97	26.9
36	I will be rewarded for the job well done	2.72	1.331	162	45.0	121	33.6
	<b>Grand mean</b>	2.29					

**Source:**

Table 4. Shown that, the employees have lowest agreement mean value 2.29 about the implementation of systematic practice of rewards. The mean value for the item related to rewards ranges between 2.72 to 1.8 with the standard deviation variation of 1.396 and 1.154 still it show homogeneity of the respondents. The gap of the response didn't be much. The employees have lowest agreement on the idea that have got financial bonus/reward when they do something extraordinary the mean of the response is 2.85 with the standard deviation of 1.396. Relatively the deviation is slightly bigger than the other responses.

**Table 5 Management Support**

	<b>Management Support <math>\alpha = 0.855</math></b>			0	0.0	0	0.0
37	Hospital management believed that having satisfied employees is as important as having satisfied clients	2.52	1.325	189	52.5	104	28.9
39	The management of the hospital are committed to satisfied my needs	2.3	1.264	221	61.4	79	21.9
40	The management is willing to fulfill required resources to facilitate professional health service	2.95	1.229	136	37.8	149	41.4
41	Before making any decision the management evaluate its impact on employees	2.46	1.242	180	50.0	91	25.3
42	Management encourages team working	3.06	1.265	128	35.6	168	46.7
	<b>Grand mean</b>	2.65		0	0.0	0	0.0

**Source:** Survey of 2016

Concerning the management support for the professional worker Table 5 indicated that majority 52.5% of the respondents express their disagreement about the believes of the management towards the importance of having satisfied employees as equal to have satisfied external customers. The mean value of the response of this item was below average which is 2.52 with a standard deviation of 1.325. Regard to the management commitment to satisfy the individual employee needs majority 61.4% of the respondents were disagree. Relatively better

number 41.1% of respondents were agreed by the management willingness to fulfill required resources in the hospital and the mean value also slightly lower than the average which is 2.95. Near to half 46.7% of respondents also agreed the management encourages team working in the hospital the mean vale also average (3.06). Whereas, half 50% of the respondents disagree about the idea before making any decision the management evaluate its impact on employees.

Generally the grand mean 2.65 indicated that professional employee relatively lower agreement about the practice of management support to facilitates their expertise activity in the hospitals.

Regard to the perception difference that has in different category of professional group of the hospital the one way ANOVA was conducted.

**ANOVA**

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Communication	Between Groups	17.294	3	5.765	8.924	.000
	Within Groups	229.970	356	.646		
	Total	247.264	359			
Training	Between Groups	2.138	3	.713	.721	.540
	Within Groups	351.731	356	.988		
	Total	353.869	359			
HRD	Between Groups	14.421	3	4.807	6.307	.000
	Within Groups	271.361	356	.762		
	Total	285.782	359			
RWS	Between Groups	11.308	3	3.769	3.926	.009
	Within Groups	341.767	356	.960		
	Total	353.075	359			
MGTS	Between Groups	23.754	3	7.918	8.300	.000
	Within Groups	339.604	356	.954		
	Total	363.358	359			

A one way between group analysis of variance was conducted to explore the impact of participants' categorical difference on the perception of internal marketing practices. Participants divided in to four classes according their special profession which are physician, Nurses, laboratory technician and pharmacists.

In the case of hospital's internal marketing practices specifically how much internal communication (Communication in the ANOVA table)performed in the table shown the descriptive analysis that indicated that the mean value accounted 2.89, it is below average score (3.00). To check assumption of homogeneity of variance of the four professional group perception score the levene's test was used. The result  $F(3,356)$  and  $P= .450$  for internal communication, .708 Training, .509 Human resource development 0. .695 for reward system and .255 for management support indicated that the group variance are equal which means it is not significantly difference the data met the assumption of homogeneity of variance.

There was statistically significant difference at the  $p < 0.001$  level in hospitals' internal communication perception score for four groups professional categories  $F(3,359)= 8.924$ .

Despite the mean score reaching statistical significant, the actual difference in mean score among group was medium. The effect size calculated using eta squared was 0.06 according to Cohen (1988) this effect level measured medium level effects.

Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD indicated that the score for physician  $M=2.78$   $SD=0.89$  was significantly different from nurses perception score  $M=3.1$   $SD=.078$ . There was no statistically significant difference in mean scores between the Physician perception with the laboratory technician perception mean score and pharmacist perception mean score

Another component of internal marketing practice component is training. There was no statistically significant difference at the  $p < 0.001$  level  $p=0.540$  in hospitals' training related practices perception score for four groups professional categories  $F(3,356)=.721$ . The mean score value is not statistically significant the actual mean score difference eta square measured is very low (0.006) it indicates low level effect.

Post-hoc comparison using the homogeneous subset results of Tukey HSD shown that the mean groups of professionals listed under the same subset are not significantly different in their mean score perception of training practices of the hospitals. The perception score of training related activities of the hospitals of pharmacist, laboratory technicians, nurses and physician are not significantly different.

In the case of hospitals' human resource development activities there were significant differences at  $P < 0.001$  level the mean score of among different professional group perception score that indicated in ANOVA table the F test result  $F(3,356)=6.307$ . However, the mean score value was statistically significant the actual mean score difference eta square measured shown that the effect of the difference is not that much great which is (0.55) it is between the lower and medium level effect. Post hoc comparison using the homogeneous subset result of Tukey HDS result shown that the mean groups of professionals listed under the same subset are not significantly different in their mean score perception of human resource development practices of the hospitals. The perception score of human resource development related activities of the hospitals of pharmacist and laboratory technician are not significantly different. And also the perception score of physician and perception score of nurses are not significantly different.

Regard to the hospitals reward system and related activities There was no statistically significant difference at the  $p < 0.05$  level  $p=0.009$  in hospitals' reward systems and related practices perception score for four groups professional categories  $F(3,356)=3.926$ . Despite the mean score value laying on statistically significant level the actual mean score difference eta square measured is very low (0.032) it indicates low level effect.

Post-hoc comparison using the homogeneous subset results of Tukey HSD shown that the mean groups of professionals listed under the same subset are not significantly different in their mean score perception of reward system of the hospitals. The perception score of reward related activities of the hospitals of pharmacist, laboratory technicians, nurses and physician are not significantly different.

When we see the result of perception score of professional groups perception related to the management support of the hospitals, there was statistically significant difference at the  $p < 0.001$  level in hospitals' management support perception score for four groups professional categories  $F(3,356)=8.300$ . Even though the mean score reaching statistical significant, The effect size calculated using eta squared was 0.065 according to Cohen (1988) this effect level measured

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medium level effects. Hence the actual difference in mean score among group was medium.

Post-hoc comparison using the homogeneous subset results of Tukey HSD shown that the mean groups of professionals listed under the same subset are not significantly different in their mean score perception of management support of the hospitals. The perception score of reward related activities of the hospitals of pharmacist, laboratory technicians, nurses and physician are not significantly different.

### Hypothesis testing

	F-Value	P- Value	Result
H1a. Professionals significantly differ in their perception about internal communication practices of the Hospitals	8.924	0.000	Accepted
H1b. Professionals significantly differ in their perception about training practices of the Hospitals	.72 1	0.540	Rejected
H1c. Professionals significantly differ in their perception about human resource development practices of the Hospitals	6.307	0.000	Accepted
H1d. Professionals significantly differ in their perception about reward related practice of the Hospitals	3.926	0.009	Accepted
H1e. Professionals significantly differ in their perception about the management support of the Hospitals.	8.300	0.000	Accepted

Based on the ANOVA result the already developed hypotheses are accepted except the professional perception about training practice the hospitals. Almost all groups of professional have similar perception specially the perception difference that has in the group of professional statically insignificant. Therefore the developed research hypothesis is rejected.

### Conclusion

The basic aims of this article are to assess the internal marketing practice of the public health care service organization. Evaluation of the perception difference of among groups of the professional employees about the internal marketing practices of sample hospitals. Based on the result all of the selected internal marketing elements performed below average level in the entire sample Hospitals.

The internal marketing practices of the public health service organizations were measured according to five constructs, namely the internal communication, Training, Human resource development, reward system and management support. As a result, Internal Marketing has not been communicated and established amongst employees in the way that was intended in the hospitals. As per the result of descriptive analysis of the perception of professional employees about five of the internal marketing elements practices are below average. The basic concept of internal marketing is special attention toward employees of all organizational levels as internal customers (Gronroos, 2001). Now a day many researches indicated that the service organization give special emphasis for employees by implementing the internal marketing practices. However, the result of this article implied that the employee have not proper attention by the organization. Further more the different group of professionals have not similar perception about the hospital current activities related to internal marketing activities. Specifically about the communication,

human resource development program reward system and management support have a significant difference. Where as there is no statistically significant difference among the perception of training related practices of the hospitals among professional.

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