General and functional level health care managers: neither 'manage' very much.

This paper reports the results of a study of 40 (20 paired general and functional level managers) in 20 health care organizations. The managers were personally interviewed and were asked to supply additional self-coded data from calendar entries, telephone logs, and in/out baskets. The results of this study indicated that health care managers, like their business counterparts, spend most of their time performing tasks other than traditionally defined management functions. In fact, major portions of the typical day of general and functional managers are spent exchanging routine information, processing paperwork, and interacting with others. As the studies have confirmed with regard to business managers, the health care general managers in this study focused much of their attention on issues and events external to the organization. The information sources they valued most were primarily external to the organization. The functional managers, by comparison, were more oriented to internal issues and information sources. In general, this study indicated that the patterns of managerial work in health care organizations are similar to those in business organizations and that managers in both settings spend half their time doing things that are not 'managerial' in nature.