

ASPECTS AND TRENDS CONCERNING THE QUALITY OF HEALTH CARE SERVICES IN ROMANIA

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ABSTRACT

The study of orientations and trends in the quality of health care services that meets the needs of sustainable and responsible development, in accordance with EU requirements is a necessity of the current period. This paper aims to highlight the main objectives of the health systems and the factors on which rely their achievement, considering that solving the important issues of health field depends both on their complexity and quality of the management. The need to improve quality management in health care is linked to the fact that in this activity this is the major route of development. Quality management in general and of the health services in particular are relatively new concepts introduced in the literature and clinical practice by taking over functions and methods of financial management, specific for quality of health care being considered planning, control and improvement. Quality problem prevails in all fields, including health care; in this area are currently elaborating many projects and methodologies for optimizing the quality, of which could be distinguished the implementation of quality management systems.

Keywords: Quality, Management, Health, Development.

1. Introduction

Today, the issue of quality prevails in all fields, health no exception, in this area more than others being elaborated numerous projects and methodologies to optimize quality. The current economic context marked by the effects of economic globalization and the global economic crisis, requires major improvements in quality of medical care services. In the current financial resources restrict and control health spending, quality become a central point in regulating health systems, and the introduction of mechanisms for resource allocation and delivery of health services. In order to improve the quality of care is important: the correct customer need establishment, cost optimization, monitoring services for health care facilities so that they can be identified early on how to improve their quality, the development of skills. That's why the best opportunity in this period is the implementation of a quality management system certification by a notified body of the competent authority under the law in force. Implementing a quality management system is a topic increasingly discussed and supported as a result of its contribution to improving the quality of medical health system. The health sector is one of the most dynamic sectors of the economy where there have been many changes regarding: expectations of patients, quality of service health, social models, public policies and technological advances.

2. Conceptual Issues Concerning The Quality Of Health Care Services

The quality of health services has a long history, which could be expressed by a synthetic expression as: trying to continuously improve quality and to minimize errors. Quality medical services represent the valuable component which provides performance in the field. (Mihai, 2005)

Quality health care is approached differently by each category of actors involved in health services: the government, patients, professionals or health management organizations. To medical services can be assigned many definitions depending on the role and importance of services.

Avedis Donabedian experts believe quality care is dependent on "how to apply the science and medical technology, so as to maximize the benefits of care without increasing risks." Regarding quality, the author emphasizes that it is "that attribute of care health which has two aspects: the process of doing the right thing and properly. (Donabedian, 2006)

The World Health Organization defines "health system quality" as "the achievement of intrinsic goals of the health system to improve health and the responsiveness to the expectations of the general population". The development of

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norms, standards and guidelines to promote quality assurance is an integral part of WHO's Constitution and has been endorsed and supported through numerous World Health Assembly resolutions and more recently in those on WHO Medium-Term Strategic Plan for 2008-2013. [9]

According to the specialized literature, for both clinical practice and health management has been defined nine quality dimensions that form the basis of medical services: [10]

- *Professional competence* - knowledge / skills / performance of medical team, managers and support team;
- *Accessibility* - provision of health services is not restricted by geographical barriers, social, cultural, organizational or economic;
- *Effectiveness* - procedures and treatment lead to desired results;
- *Efficiency* - granting medical services necessary corresponding to the lowest cost;
- *Interpersonal relationships* - interaction between suppliers of providers and patients (customers), of managers, providers and payers, as well as between the medical team and community;
- *Continuity* - patients receiving a full set of medical services they need in a well-defined order, without interruption or repetition diagnostic and treatment procedures;
- *Safety* - minimal risk to the patient of complications or adverse effects treatment or other hazards associated with the provision of medical services;
- *Physical infrastructure and comfort* - cleanliness, comfort, privacy and other issues important to patients;
- *Choice* - as possible, the customer chooses the supplier, type of insurance or treatment.

Quality of medical services is analysed in terms of two major components, the technical component, professional and the quality perceived by patient. Technical quality of care is usually reported to the technical competence, compliance with clinical protocols and practice guidelines, the use of infections control measures, information and counselling, medical integrating and efficient management. For patients is very important communication and attention provided by the healthcare professionals so that their expectations are met; in terms of patient attention given by health professionals in the provision of medical services required, is the essence of quality of care. (Butu & Dragomîştireanu, 2007)

We believe that definition of quality health services can be assigned to a common denominator and that is to satisfy current and potential customer needs and try as much as possible to provide services to increase patient satisfaction.

3. Factors Influencing Quality in the Health Care

In a general acceptance, the main factors affecting medical services are consumer demand, technology, social factors and public policies. [11]

The consumer demand is determined in turn by new services, ease of use, representative for the population and the acknowledged need. In recent years medical professionals have been concerned about diversification and hence the introduction of new services, list of medical services that were based primarily on preventive care. Changes in demand for preventive care that can enhance short-term costs reduce long-term health care costs. [11]

Social factors that influence significantly the quality of medical service are considered: change in diet, physical exercise, teenage pregnancy, smoking, labor force changing, and abuse of harmful substances. Medical services are also affected by changes in social patterns and habits. Social change may increase health care costs, may change the way

That such care is required and the resulting changes in the medical system reflect social values.

Technological progress level is responsible for many of the major changes recorded in the provision of medical services, because it may:

- Increase or reduce health care costs;
- Increase patient comfort and safety;
- Treat diseases that previously had no treatment options;
- Improve treatment for certain diseases;
- Changing the way that health care is provided. (Sandu, 2012)

Public policies are another factor influencing the quality of medical services. Thus, different payment systems and government policies have created strong incentives for health care providers. (Antony & Bhattacharyya, 2010)

There are numerous factors that contributed to the increase in costs treatment. These factors include increased demand medical services having limited resources, increased share of health insurance, improving technologies with a number of new medical innovations that improve the diagnostic capabilities and increase the doctor's dependency of medical diagnostic procedures. The increased demand for quality health services play a critical role in increasing overall costs for medical services.

In conclusion, the various components that impact on health and that influence quality include: (Shah, 2011)

- ✓ Integrated and comprehensive services based on application, adequate infrastructure and logistics;
- ✓ Staff training, knowledge, skills, technical knowledge;
- ✓ Availability of drugs, technologies and safe and effective treatment, with a direct impact

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- ✓ On health and availability;
- ✓ An information system to assist in development planning based on population needs;
- ✓ Accountability that improves the results on health and, therefore, improves the quality;
- ✓ The cost-effectiveness ratio.

Although mentioned parameters have a direct impact on health is difficult to measure the influence their impact on quality of care. In health care, the results play a crucial role in determining the quality. However the importance experience and customer satisfaction can be underestimated. Healthcare providers often use patient satisfaction surveys to understand gaps in quality of care provided and to identify critical areas for improvement. (Shah, 2011)

4. Management and Quality of Healthcare in Romania

The main objectives of the health systems and the factors on which rely their achievement, considering that solving the important issues of health field depends both on their complexity and quality of the management. The need to improve quality management in health care is linked to the fact that in this activity this is the major route of development.

Management of health services involves the analysis of a set formed by the elements of the medical and paramedical health during the activities, processes which meet the goals of health units and human, material, financial and information necessary to achieve effective medical care. This analysis is performed at the technical, social and human level. Quality management in general and health services in particular are relatively new concepts introduced in the literature and clinical practice by taking the methods and financial management functions: planning, organizing, directing and coordinating, training and motivation, monitoring and evaluation, continuous improvement. Specific for quality health services are considered to be: planning, control and improvement. (Butu & Dragomîştireanu, 2007)

The medical services in Romania are still in transition, services being in high proportion public services. The system is coordinated by the public health ministry and the 41 county departments of public health and the Bucharest department of public health. Analysis of the challenges facing the health system (the problem of funding, requirements for quality of care and diversifying demand for medical services, medical personnel migration, etc.), reveal the need to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of health care services providers by an appropriate organization. (Sandu, 2012)

The collaboration between the World Health Organization and other organizations has led to concepts related to quality of care. These are used by Member

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States to their own control strategies and in providing medical services. Because social values and consumption of health services appears the importance of ensuring quality of care provided by the principles underlying the concept of quality management in public health. [12]

Implementing a quality management system is a topic increasingly discussed and supported as a result of its contribution to improving the quality of medical health system. In Romania, the private sector of health care is more familiar with the concept of quality assurance; there are many medical laboratories, medical centres, and hospitals that provide medical services in the health insurance system. Such units that have contracts with the health insurance fund are bound quality criteria imposed by the application of the framework contract, namely the implementation or quality management system certification according referential effect. Currently both the quality management system certification for organizations Romanian health system and medical analysis laboratory accreditation is voluntary, but is encouraged by requiring compliance enforcement framework contract, where the medical unit wants to work system health insurance. (Sandu, 2012)

According to the literature and experience, a medical unit implements a quality management system for several reasons: to customer requests; to extend medical services including the European market, improving the image; increase sales and profits; is a goal of unity in the medium and long term; competition QMS implemented; to demonstrate the professionalism and competence to give quality care. (Sorescu, 2008)

Implementation of quality assurance systems in the medical units plays an important role in the accuracy of diagnosis of the patient, client receiving the medical services provided.

Knowledge of environmental influences that they exert on the health units by the action of economic factors, managerial, political, technical, demographic, cultural, legal and eco has a special importance for managers of these units, as well as the health sector analysts, because it contributes to: understanding the mechanism of formation, operation and development of health units; knowing the way in which the design and performance management process in health units and complement the knowledge needed to meet the demands arising from changing dynamic environment. (Furtunescu & Mincă, 2010)

Conclusions

Management of public health services shows a high degree of complexity and is in a continuous transformation process, being not only the subject of concern of employees in the health units and the related institutions, but also a high priority on the political agenda of many countries. Introducing the concepts of quality assurance, continuous quality improvement and quality management is a separate component of health service reform in Romania. Continuous quality improvement is a prerequisite

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for survival in the competitive struggle between health units and also a means of controlling health care costs. The main actors involved in the continuous improvement of quality of care are providers (physicians and healthcare organizations), donors (health insurance houses) and beneficiaries (patients). In the not too distant future, only sanitary units that will change their strategies accordingly will survive. In this respect, it is necessary that implies the strong managerial competences of successful liability business areas, which require interdisciplinary knowledge and experience. Healthcare managers must have among other things, some special skills such as the capacity to communicate effectively and the quality to motivate the employees.

World Health Organization collaborating with other organizations in order to achieve some concepts related to quality of care. They are used by WHO Member States for the own control strategies and ensuring the quality of care.

Applying quality management orientation promotes health organization to continuously improve performance in the long term by focusing on the customer and taking into account the needs of all other stakeholders, while ensuring benefits in the following areas: strategy and policy formulation, setting goals, operational management and human resource management and could be a successfully solution for the Romanian health system.

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