

Chapter 3

Approaches to Evidence-Based Management and Decision-Making in Healthcare Organizations: Lessons for Developing Nations

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ABSTRACT

Decision-making is an essential process that everyone takes upon at all times. Healthcare managers make decisions to ensure serving high quality of patient care, reduce costs and allocate resources. Evidence based decision making in healthcare has recently received a lot of attention by all health care stakeholders including clinicians, researchers, managers and policy makers. However, it is more adapted by clinicians and researchers than managers and policy makers. Evidence-Based science began to develop in the early 90s and was later named “Evidence Based Medicine” after its methods have been applied in health-related fields. Yet, Evidence Based Management still showing a slow progress in terms of its application in decision-making in practice worldwide. This chapter seeks to examine the key aspects of decision-making in the health care settings. It further seeks to provide key examples of decision-making and ways to seek evidence, types of evidence, and approaches to making evidence-based decisions.

INTRODUCTION

Decision-making is an essential and continuous process that is taken by everyone all the time. However, for managers and decision makers it is an essential component of their roles. Healthcare managers make decisions to ensure serving high quality of patient care, reduce costs and allocate resources. To take decisions to overcome problems or to choose between two or more choices and to make the needed ac-

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tions, decision making should be based on scientific information that is collected, analyzed and applied to ensure successful managerial choices and decisions (Akrani, 6/01/2010 10:24:00 PM).

Evidence based decision making in health care is an approach based on relevant and up-to-date valid research (Gray, 2009). It is used to help to standardize the management process and improve the quality of patient care. Evidence based decision making in health care has recently received a lot of attention by all health care stakeholders: Clinicians, researchers, managers and policy makers. However, it is more adapted by clinicians and researchers than managers and policy makers (Walshe & Rundall, 2001). This scientific process is well known, as evidence-based practice (EBP), a science which started to develop in 1992 and was named “Evidence Based Medicine” after its methods have been applied in other health-related fields such as nursing, education sciences, psychology and other fields (Hjørland, 2011). Yet, Evidence Based Management is not commonly used by healthcare managers, and not well followed in developing countries. In addition, this scientific way of applying evidence is still showing a slow progress in term of actual decision making in practice worldwide (Walshe & Rundall, 2001).

In 1996, Sackett defined the Evidence Based Practice (EBP), which is originally concerned with managing individual patients as “The conscientious, explicit and judicious use of current best evidence in making decisions about the care of the individual patient. It means integrating individual clinical expertise with the best available external clinical evidence from systematic research,” (Straus & Sackett, 1998) Evidence Based Management is concerned with making managerial decisions in healthcare management based on scientific information instead of experience and educated guessing and focuses on managing systems rather than individuals (Kovner, Fine, & D’Aquila, 2009). It focuses on organizational issues to manage and influences the delivery of health care with high quality. That can be an important toll in quality management (Shortell, Rundall, & Hsu, 2007).

The increase of medical services costs caused by the growth of the medical fields and medical innovation was one factor leading to scholars, policy makers and managers giving greater attention to applications of evidence based perspective and methods in health care management and policy. Evidence Based Management aims to reach justified decisions and approved effectiveness of health policies by conducting valid research, exactly as the approved medical interventions effectiveness on patients by the EBP (Walshe & Rundall, 2001).

In developing countries, most health care managers are hired without having a relevant educational background and training to be qualified for these roles. They often only have general management skills, and rely on their experience and prior knowledge for decision-making. This hampers efforts to establish a standard and structured form of decisions (Walshe & Rundall, 2001). In order to apply Evidence Based Management in health care organizations, health care managers need to have adequate training in research methods. In addition, the Evidence Based Management approach must be incorporated into graduate programs in health care management (Walshe & Rundall, 2001).

DISCUSSION

Several textbooks and researchers in the field of healthcare management have suggested approaches or steps for a valid decision making process. A commonly used decision making model identifies seven steps in decision-making leading to the best possible managerial outcome.

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