

CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTING CLIENT FEEDBACK MECHANISMS IN HEALTHCARE SERVICES IN NORTH WEST FRONTIER PROVINCE IN PAKISTAN

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Abstract:

Assuring quality in health care is a priority for any health care system worldwide. Applying modern quality management methods is seen as a crucial part of health sector reforms in many countries, among them Pakistan. Also in development cooperation the importance of the introduction of quality management in health care has been acknowledged.

One important principle of Quality Management is the shift to emphasizing client orientation of service provision. Feedback collected from clients about the services they receive should be used to improve the health care system continuously and to assess the level of the implementation of certain health care standards. An additional complaint management mechanism ensures patient rights and gives the possibility to settle disagreements between clients and service providers. It also helps detecting severe weaknesses of the system. Several studies in the south and central Asian region have proven the feasibility of large scale assessments of client feedback.

Client feedback and complaint management mechanisms in Pakistan so far rely on the dedication of individual managers. Recently, a process to develop healthcare standards was initiated. One of the standards will require complaint and feedback mechanisms be used in the future.

This study analyses the existing feedback and complaint management mechanisms in place in secondary health care facilities in North West Frontier Province (NWFP) in Pakistan and assesses the views of managers, staff and patients on these mechanisms. Using a qualitative methodology including semi-structured interviews, facility visits, a focus group discussion and a literature review the study identifies drivers and obstacles of the implementation of client feedback and complaint management mechanisms in NWFP. Obstacles include a lack of awareness among managers on the concept of feedback, a lack of autonomy in the public sector giving little incentives for improvements, a tendency not to value clients' views among certain service providers and difficulties to get unbiased feedback from some patients due to the high illiteracy rate and the prevalent gender inequalities in NWFP. On the other hand drivers like government commitment, a general interest to improve quality among service providers, responsiveness among clients and the already existing feedback and complaint management mechanisms in some facilities underline the possibility to introduce mechanisms on a wider scale.

Finally the study recommends steps which could be taken in order to implement client feedback and complaint management mechanisms in NWFP. These include details on information to be given to the decision makers in the government, the managers in the facilities and the public. Additionally details on the development of materials to be used in the facilities are recommended and tools for the collection of feedback and complaints are suggested.