Performance evaluation of newly trained family physicians and nurses in Georgia

Strengthening the primary care system is one of the main objectives of National health reform. This objective is being met by training health professionals in family medicine and creating an institutional framework for them to function effectively.

The aim of the study was to evaluate the effectiveness of educational strategies utilized within the family medicine re-training programs.

A target group included 182 physicians and 193 nurses who completed a re-training program within the past 12 months and returned to their respective primary care settings. Both, qualitative and quantitative methods were employed for evaluating the practice patterns of newly trained practitioners. Data were collected according to standardized protocols. Evaluators were trained in interviewing and peer reviewing.

The following were identified as barriers to the effective running of a practice: lack of disease management protocols (85% of participants); low motivation due to low reimbursement (95% of participants); lack of family medicine service contracts with the State purchaser (95% of participants); poor facilities (65% of participants); unclear task distribution (62% of physicians;82% of nurses); poor systems for patient data recording (95% of participants). Almost half of the physicians reported the need to improve ophthalmoscopy, otoscopy, and ECG interpretation skills. Nurses emphasized elderly and emergency care as areas in which they need more training. Although all respondents expressed satisfaction with training programs, 30% considered revising the training curricula as necessary.

In conclusion, the effectiveness of the training program, based on performance review, is difficult to evaluate unless there are right institutional and contractual arrangements in place that allow for the application of acquired competencies. However, this study's results can facilitate elaborating primary care reform policy proposals and improving national family medicine training standards.