

Comparison of health care professionals' and surveyors' opinions on problems and obstacles in implementing quality management system in Thailand: a national survey

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Abstract

Objectives. To explore problems and obstacles of hospitals in Thailand implementing quality management systems according to the hospital accreditation (HA) standards.

Design. Questionnaire survey.

Setting. Thirty-nine hospitals in all 13 regions of Thailand.

Participants. A total of 728 health care professionals and 41 surveyors of the national accreditation program.

Main outcome measures. Health care professionals' and surveyors' opinions on problems and obstacles in 24 items representing Thailand HA standards.

Results. The response rates were 94.9 and 73.2% in health care professionals and surveyors, respectively. More than 90% of both groups thought that there had been problems in the items such as 'quality improvement (QI) activities' and 'integration and utilization of information'. The items considered by health care professionals as major obstacles included 'adequacy of staff' (34.6%) and 'integration and utilization of information' (26.6%), for example. For surveyors, 'integration and utilization of information' was ranked highest as presenting a major obstacle (43.9%), followed by 'discharge and referral process' (31.7%) and 'medical recording process' (29.3%). The rank orders for the 24 items as problems and major obstacles were similar in both groups (Spearman's rank correlation 0.436, $P = 0.033$ and 0.583, $P = 0.003$, respectively). Surveyors had a higher degree of concern and paid more attention to care-related items than health care professionals.

Conclusions. Health care professionals have been facing many problems with multidisciplinary process-related issues of the accreditation standard, whereas surveyors might have had some difficulties in conveying the core QI concepts to them. The findings might be explained by the effects of health care reform on the underlying accreditation principles. One of the strategies to respond to the situation was presented.

Keywords: developing countries, hospital accreditation, hospital care quality, hospital staff, provider perceptions, standards, surveys

As in other developed and developing countries, concerns about quality of health care have been increasing in Thailand. These are expressed in both the current Constitution [1] and through recent health care reforms [2]. However, quality improvement (QI) and accreditation are still in their infancy in many developing and transitional countries, including Thailand. To improve the quality of health services, various

strategies have been pursued including the hospital accreditation (HA) program, one of the most noticeable and modern mechanisms.

Conceived in 1996 as a research and development project, the HA program was closely modeled after the Canadian Council on Health Services Accreditation (CCHSA). Participating hospitals are required to apply Total Quality

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