

319: METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES OF THE EFFECTS OF CERTIFICATION AND ACCREDITATION ON HEALTHCARE

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Objective:

The purpose of the study is to find the effects of certification and accreditation of quality systems on the outcome in healthcare.

Methods:

A literature study has been carried out to the effects of certification and accreditation of quality systems on the outcome of health care. Reference will be made to the effects of certification on the performance in the profit sector.

The study focused on following questions:

- What are the recent developments and trends in certification and accreditation in health care?
- Are certification and accreditation effective ways to improve the outcome?
- Which conditions are needed to attain the most effects on outcome?

For the critical reflection, a search for articles on the effect of certification and accreditation on the outcome was used. The Cochrane Library was checked for articles on the effects of certification and accreditation. In addition, some of the main general medical journals such as BMJ and JAMA, and relevant health services research journals, such as The Joint Commission Journal on Quality Improvement, International Journal on Quality in Health Care, Quality in Health Care and Milbank Quarterly were electronically searched. To find literature on the effects of certification in the profit sector a search was performed in journals such as Quality Management Journal, TQM, Quality Progress and the International Journal of Quality and Reliability Management.

Results:

- Certification and accreditation of quality systems have been changing rapidly in recent years to accommodate to the developments of TQM and patient-centeredness in healthcare. The focus is moving from structure and process to outcome. The clinical component of accreditation has also increased, by the introduction of performance measures in the accreditation program, leading to documented evidence of improvement in patient management and outcomes.
- ISO certification has changed dramatically; the focus has shifted from process oriented to outcome oriented through the implementation of feedback cycles. ISO certification has become more compatible to other quality management models. This literature search is based on effects of certification and accreditation according to the old procedures.
- Evidence regarding the impact of certification and accreditation on the outcome of care is mixed or simply lacking. It appears to be the most effective to integrate different quality models for improving the outcome of care. In the profit sector the product quality improves overall as a result of ISO certification. Other effects have been found, but evidence regarding these effects is mixed. The effects of certification and accreditation depend heavily on the context in which they are used and the way they are implemented.

Conclusions

- The effects of certification and accreditation on outcomes of healthcare are divers in a range from no effect to some effect.
- The introduction of the new ISO 9000: 2000 norm may change this since the new ISO standard is more outcome oriented while the former ISO standard is more process oriented.
- The shifting focus from process and structure to outcome and the increased clinical component may as well enlarge the effect of certification and accreditation on outcomes.

- Certification and accreditation appear to be the most effective in combination with other quality systems.
- A good implementation of a certified or accredited quality system also appears to be more important in improving the outcome (of care) than the specific quality system that is being used. The integration of different quality methods has probably the most effect on the outcome of care.