

266: DETERMINANTS OF PHYSICIANS' USE OF CLINICAL GUIDELINES IN ADULT IN-PATIENT DEPARTMENTS IN BRITTANY, FRANCE.

Authors :

Riou F., Veillard D., Jarno P., Coutte M.B., Chaperon J.

Objective :

To identify factors affecting the use of clinical guidelines by interns and physicians practicing at adult in-patient departments in Brittany hospitals.

Methods :

We conducted in 2001 a survey of all interns and physicians practicing at adult in-patient departments (excluding surgery, psychiatry, geriatrics, and anesthesiology) in one of the 22 Brittany hospitals : 2 teaching hospitals, 6 large and 14 small hospitals (hospital bed capacity of respectively 1000 to 1500, 300 to 700 and 150 to 300 beds). 211 interns and 572 physicians were included in the survey.

Two self-administered questionnaires were developed for interns and physicians on the basis of results from a qualitative survey, carried on in 2000 and involving in-depth interviews of 10 physicians and 20 interns practicing at one of the two teaching hospitals. The 50 closed-ended questions (plus comments) covered respondents' personal (sex, age) and professional characteristics (years of training or practice, setting, area of specialty), and their views on guidelines and factors which may influence their use of guidelines.

In each hospital, relay physicians were responsible for the distribution of the questionnaires along with an information letter about the survey, the official definition of clinical guidelines by the French quality of health care agency, and information about cover pages, format and content of local and national guidelines. The relay physicians made follow-up contacts and collected respondents' questionnaires.

Using SPSS 10.00, we undertook a descriptive analysis of the data respectively from interns and physicians. We assessed variations in answers according to respondents' professional characteristics by univariate analysis (contingency tables and chi-square test for statistical significance) .

Results :

The survey response rate was 50% for physicians (284) and 53% for interns (111).

Over 80% of respondents found the official definition of guidelines to be close to their own and found more positive than negative points to guidelines (decision making tool, standardization of practices vs rigidity, lack of freedom in practice.)

62% reported using guidelines, most used 1 to 5 different guidelines regularly and they used general medicine guidelines more frequently.

Over 80% of respondents reported that some attributes would increase their guidelines' use rate:

- Focus on general medicine (79% of interns, 75% physicians);
- Both diagnosis and treatment covered (79% of interns, 66% of physicians);
- Development at national level with local adaptation (66% of interns, 54% of physicians);
- Usage as a self-training tool in practices evaluation (66% interns, 55% physicians);
- Pocket-sized or A4 format (respectively 76% and 64% of interns, 56% and 55% of physicians);
- Synthetic presentation (70% of interns, 60% of physicians);
- 45% of interns and 55% of physicians reported they would use computer-based guidelines more often.

Only 25% of interns reported receiving information on the guidelines they used. Over 83% of respondents thought that distribution and promotion efforts were needed.

55% of physicians were reportedly willing to participate in guidelines development and promotion.

Respondents suggested that the shortage of up-to-date guidelines, lack of resources in smaller hospitals, and lack of staff time in large hospitals limited guidelines use.

Conclusions:

In the hospitals where the relay physicians had actively pursued follow up contacts, non-respondents were assumed to be non-users and non-participants in efforts to improve guidelines. Overall 30% use rate and 50% expressed interest rate were thus estimated to be more representative of interns and physicians views. Our study results will be used in program development, as part of a regional effort to increase guideline use in Brittany hospitals.