

Health Care Evaluation in Nepal

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There has been increasing violence against health care providers throughout Nepal.¹ The Physical assault against doctors and health care providers and vandalism in the hospital has become a part of regular news in national daily newspapers.² Many of these incidences have been attributed to death of a patient and the accusation is mostly laid down to doctor or nurse or other health care providers or hospitals for negligence, mismanagement, poor quality of services and so forth.¹ There might have been various factors for this escalating incidents in health care industry, contributing to negative impact on health services. Therefore, we need to look into this matter seriously to mitigate the issues through evidence based health services research.

According to Smith et al "Throughout the world, health care is practised in a wide variety of ways. Nearly every society seeks improved health for its members. When the basic necessities for survival have been met the search for better health is often pursued by seeking better forms of health care. No nation can afford to provide all the health care that its population would want. It can, however, ensure that it obtains the greatest benefit from those resources available for health care. This is where the systematic evaluation of health care can help".³

After the introduction of democracy in early 1990s, there has been establishment of new hospitals from small to large scale and medical colleges in an escalating rate. Lately, there has been growing concern against the government for failing to effectively maintain the quality of care provided by these health care providers. Neither government has come out with effective solution nor the public has stopped blaming. We cannot afford to have this status quo for long.

It is high time for the government to set up Health Care Evaluation (HCE) in Nepal. "It provides evidence for decision about which service should be provided by identifying which interventions work and which are

affordable. It has become also very important for health care planning because the resources are limited and demands are high".³

HCE is a critical assessment of the degree to which a health care service fulfils stated objectives using scientifically rigorous methods. Therefore, it is complex and challenging but with proper planning, vision and commitment it can be introduced to improve health services in our country. It has to be started from some point in the development of a nation. No country in the world will have improved health if they don't perform evaluation of their own health services. Despite of having various methods of providing health services in the country, government can introduce a mechanism to ensure that these services have maintained minimum standard of care.

HCE will provide an opportunity to our understanding of which methods and innovations work to improve health care. It will tell us which small scale changes can be replicated across the health services to bring about improvement on a large scale, nationwide. HCE has also become very relevant as expectation of having quality of care from the perspective of users is increasing day by day.

Health services may be delivered in various ways such as curative treatments, diagnostic services, rehabilitation care, palliative care, respite care and preventive services which can be provided by doctors, nurse, other health professionals, carers and even lay people in hospital, clinics and other setting to an individual or group or the population.

Hence, patients want to know the scientific reason of benefit and risk of any health care intervention and cost effectiveness. Without evidence, there is a risk of adopting ineffective intervention, clinical practice will differ excessively between doctors, or we may not know whether to invest in new treatments or not sure how to

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meet changing demands for health care. Therefore, HCE has to be priority based, scientifically sound, feasible and actionable.

"The process of evaluation seeks to analyse health care intervention in terms of four key dimension - effectiveness, efficiency, humanity and equity. This process can be used to compare one or more interventions in such a way that the policy-makers can chose which to provide for their population. Hence, evaluation is a key activity of health service research".³

An individual, organization or the government can conduct HCE. An independent researcher usually work for their interest, expertise and the opportunity whereas an organization such as hospital can set up HCE team to improve hospital services, while government can set up HCE to implement its findings for policy making to improve health in the country.

"Even if you are not performing evaluative research yourself, as a manager you need to develop an awareness of the methods used and interpretation of results. Putting health care evaluation into practice

is an essential process of health care planning and management".³

HCE has not got the priority in our country because we are focusing more on service delivery due to high demand. But we need to develop mechanism to ensure that the service being provided is effective, efficient and equitable with humanity. Which can be achieved through applying the principle of health care evaluation in health service research.

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