

Assessment of PhilHealth CARES Project

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ABSTRACT

Background:

The PhilHealth Customer Assistance, Relations and Empowerment Staff (CARES) project was launched in 2012 to provide a more personalized approach to ensure members' access to essential information about their benefits at the point-of-service. In 2013, an interim assessment of the project was conducted in selected facilities in the National Capital Region that showed that the project improved the ease of claims processing, and that the nurses were patient navigators. However, with the expansion of the project to 600 health facilities nationwide, there is a need to evaluate the project since its launch, and to determine whether the gaps identified in the initial assessment have been addressed.

Objectives:

The study assessed the design and quality of implementation of the PhilHealth CARES project in selected hospitals nationwide. The general objectives were:

1. Identify the changes implemented in the last 3 years to address the critical gaps identified in the 2013 interim assessment
2. Compare the effect of the PhilHealth CARES project on PhilHealth members' awareness, knowledge, and satisfaction between users and non-users of PCARES
3. Determine the level of job satisfaction among the PCARES nurses
4. Elicit the perception and recommendations of hospital administrators regarding the advantages and disadvantages of the presence of PCARES in hospitals
5. Identify other PhilHealth services that should be offered at the point-of-benefit availment

Methodology:

Survey, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and review of documents were used to identify the projects' strengths, gaps and points for improvement. Data collection was done in 18 hospitals among the 3 major island groups and the National Capital Region. Inpatient members and their relatives/companions, PCARES nurses, and hospital administrators in each of these sites were invited to participate. PHIC and PCARES project management staff of each region visited was also interviewed.

Results and Discussion:

PhilHealth CARES project is highly appreciated among patients, caretakers, hospital administrators, PhilHealth managers and executives, and PCARES staff themselves. The project extends the Corporation's services for members and non-members, and areas not usually covered by PhilHealth offices. Hospitals want to have PCARES as it makes their operations and handling of PhilHealth better. A number of critical gaps were observed (e.g. unclear PCARES organizational structure within PhilHealth, lack of manpower, possible non-renewal of project, discrepancy in policy interpretation, etc.) that need to be addressed to ensure efficient delivery of services, and to satisfy all stakeholders. PCARES is a useful project that should be elevated to program status.