

Challenges to Quality Primary Health Care in Saudi Arabia and Potential Improvements Implemented by Other Systems

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Abstract : Introduction: As primary healthcare centres play an important role in implementing Saudi Arabia's health strategy, this paper offers a review of publications on the quality of the country's primary health care. With the aim of deciding on solutions for improvement, it provides an overview of healthcare quality in this context and indicates barriers to quality. Method: Using two databases, ProQuest and Scopus, data extracted from published articles were systematically analysed for determining the care quality in Saudi primary health centres and obstacles to achieving higher quality. Results: Twenty-six articles met the criteria for inclusion in this review. The components of healthcare quality were examined in terms of the access to and effectiveness of interpersonal and clinical care. Good access and effective care were identified in such areas as maternal health care and the control of epidemic diseases, whereas poor access and effectiveness of care were shown for chronic disease management programmes, referral patterns (in terms of referral letters and feedback reports), health education and interpersonal care (in terms of language barriers). Several factors were identified as barriers to high-quality care. These included problems with evidence-based practice implementation, professional development, the use of referrals to secondary care and organisational culture. Successful improvements have been implemented by other systems, such as mobile medical units, electronic referrals, online translation tools and mobile devices and their applications; these can be implemented in Saudi Arabia for improving the quality of the primary healthcare system in this country. Conclusion: The quality of primary health care in Saudi Arabia varies among the different services. To improve quality, management programmes and organisational culture must be promoted in primary health care. Professional development strategies are also needed for improving the skills and knowledge of healthcare professionals. Potential improvements can be implemented to improve the quality of the primary health system.

Keywords : quality, primary health care, Saudi Arabia, health centres, general medical

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