

Tackling Inequalities in Regional Health Care: Accompanying an Inter-Sectoral Cooperation Project between University Medicine and Regional Care Structures

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Abstract : Ageing populations, advances in medical sciences and digitalization, diversity and social disparities, as well as the increasing need for skilled healthcare professionals, are challenging healthcare systems around the globe. To address these challenges, future healthcare systems need to center on human needs taking into account the living environments that shape individuals' knowledge of and opportunities to access healthcare. Moreover, health should be considered as a common good and an integral part of securing livelihoods for all people. Therefore, the adoption of a systems approach, as well as interdisciplinary and inter-sectoral cooperation among healthcare providers, are essential. Additionally, the active engagement of target groups in the planning and design of healthcare structures is indispensable to understand and respect individuals' health and livelihood needs. We will present the research project b4 - identifying needs | building bridges | developing health care in the social space, which is situated within this reasoning and accompanies the cross-sectoral cooperation project Brückenschlag (building bridges) in a Bavarian district. Brückenschlag seeks to explore effective ways of health care linking university medicine (Maximalversorgung | maximum care) with regional inpatient, outpatient, rehabilitative, and preventive care structures (Regionalversorgung | regional care). To create advantages for both (potential) patients and the involved cooperation partners, project b4 qualitatively assesses needs and motivations among professionals, population groups, and political stakeholders at individual and collective levels. Besides providing an overview of the project structure as well as of regional population and healthcare characteristics, the first results of qualitative interviews conducted with different health experts will be presented. Interviewed experts include managers of participating hospitals, nurses, medical specialists working in the hospital and registered doctors operating in practices in rural areas. At the end of the project life and based on the identified factors relevant to the success -and also for failure- of participatory cooperation in health care, the project aims at informing other districts embarking on similar systems-oriented and human-centered healthcare projects. Individuals' health care needs in dependence on the social space in which they live will guide the development of recommendations.

Keywords : cross-sectoral collaboration in health care, human-centered health care, regional health care, individual and structural health conditions

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