

Public Reporting of Information on the Quality of Health Care and Social Services

Current Situation

Public reporting of information on the quality of health care and social services promotes better transparency of the healthcare system and could potentially improve quality of care. The overall impact of public reporting remains to be determined as well as best practices and challenges associated with such approach, particularly in the Canadian healthcare system.

Implications

Thirty years following the first public reporting program, evidence of the overall efficacy of public reporting of information on the quality of health care remains weak.

There is no consensus on best practices for public reporting initiatives while challenges are numerous.

The applicability of our findings to the Canadian health system is uncertain since the majority of the studies found in the reviews took place in the United States.

What Were the Objectives?

To identify the **impact, best practices and challenges associated with public reporting** of information on the quality of health care and social services aimed at continuous quality improvement and reflective practices.

How Was the Review Conducted?

We conducted a systematic review of literature reviews that included **32 reviews** in total.

What Did the Review Find?

Characteristics of Public Reporting Interventions

The types of public reporting interventions were varied (i.e., online reports, websites, media coverage), the nature of publicly reported data heterogeneous (i.e., cost, surveillance, prevention, patient experience), and originated from different types of organizations (i.e., research groups, governments, healthcare establishments, professional associations).

Impact of Public Reporting

While public reporting improved health indicators and healthcare providers' engagement towards quality improvement in some instances, reviews had overall mixed conclusions regarding its impact. Public reporting appeared to have a negative impact on the accessibility of health care and social services.

Potential Moderating Factors to the Impact of Public Reporting

The impact of public reporting appeared to be superior in healthcare systems in which there exists large performance gaps between providers and in competitive healthcare systems subject to free market laws.

Unexpected Consequences of Public Reporting

Some reviews indicated a decrease in access to health care and social services by patients due to risk aversion (refusal of high-risk level patients). Healthcare providers and establishments may be tempted to adopt strategies to give the illusion of improvements without actual changes in quality and may emphasize the importance of publicly reported indicators to the detriment of equally important non-publicly reported ones.

Challenges and Potential Solutions (Best Practices)

| Challenges | Solutions |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Validity of published data Risk aversion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritizing process indicators Demonstrating validity of data sources Dissemination at the establishment level Implement auditing systems (data verification) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perceived practicality, accessibility, and coherence | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involving stakeholders Tailoring interventions to the audience (adjusting diffusion modalities) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Power to act on the publicly reported indicators | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementing feedback mechanisms |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Added burden on healthcare providers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using pre-existing data collection systems Implementing a universal platform |

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