Improving hospital planning and management

Fact sheet: August 2018

Key facts

Improving hospital performance is vital for achieving universal health coverage (UHC) but countries face many challenges.

There are many challenges at the facilities and health system level which impair hospital performance.

Strengthening accountability, efficiency, quality, equity, and sustainability and resilience in hospitals can improve their performance.

Regulatory, financing, monitoring and system design tools can ensure that hospitals contribute to UHC.

Hospitals are core to health service delivery. Achieving universal health coverage (UHC) is impossible without clearly identifying the role of hospitals and optimizing their performance.

Facility-level challenges such as weak management, escalating costs, long waiting periods, poor quality and safety, and low patient satisfaction impair hospital performance. At the level of the health system, challenges such as limited integration with primary health care, fragmented funding, weak regulation and inadequate monitoring impair hospital performance.

These challenges occur against the backdrop of rapid population ageing, prevalence of chronic health conditions, fiscal pressures, new medical technologies and pharmaceuticals, proliferation of private health-care providers, and growing public expectations.

Given the vital importance of hospitals and persistent challenges, improving hospital planning and management has become a critical issue for countries in the Region.

Hospitals can be considered a microcosm of the broader health system. Therefore, at the facility level, focus should be on strengthening accountability, efficiency, quality, equity and sustainability and resilience – five interrelated attributes of a high-performing health system.

At the system level, governments should use key performance drivers such as financing, regulation and feedback to improve hospital performance. Governments also need to clearly determine the role of hospitals in advancing UHC and their relations with other state and non-state providers.

Improving hospital performance is a complex task. The health sector needs to expand its skills as well as strengthen existing capabilities to drive the change. Equally important is the health sector’s institutional capacity to anticipate and respond timely to the changes, at the system and facility levels.

WHO response

WHO supports policies and actions to improve hospital planning and management to advance UHC and progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

WHO undertakes policy analysis, convenes policy dialogue, helps build capacity, and provides technical advice to improve hospital planning and management.

WHO also supports Member States in developing and implementing system- and facility-level policies and actions to improve hospital planning and management, in line with their UHC road maps.

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