Title - To trust or not to trust - A valid measure of trust in doctors as an indicator of quality of health care in developing countries

Health System Research Field Building Dimension – Cutting – edge research

Research Topic – Strengthening Quality of Care

Background: Trust in the doctor underlies good therapeutic relationships. Studies have shown that greater trust in the doctor leads to better clinical outcomes. Therefore building a trusting doctor-patient relationship becomes imperative in provision of good quality health care. A valid scale to measure trust in doctors can be employed as a quality indicator. Trust in doctors is strongly influenced by the cultural context of the community. Therefore good measures of trust in doctors have to be culturally contextualized.

Objectives: This study was done to develop and validate a culturally contextual scale to measure trust in doctors in developing country settings like India.

Methodology: Qualitative studies were done to identify the key domains of trust in doctors namely, perceived competence, assurance of good treatment, confidence, loyalty and respect for the doctor. Using these domains a 12 item scale was developed and tested using psychometric methods. The tool had items on a Likert scale with a least score for each item being 1 and highest being 5. The 12 item scale was administered to 124 individuals who were asked to respond to the questions regarding a doctor they trusted the most and 110 individuals regarding a doctor they did not trust.

Results: The mean scores on each item were statistically significantly greater in the trusting category compared to the distrusting category. Discriminant function analysis of the twelve item scores revealed a statistically significant model (Wilk's Lambda 0.475, Chi square 160.9, p value <0.001). It revealed a classification accuracy of 83.5% with a sensitivity of 83.9% and specificity of 83%.

Conclusion: This measure of trust in doctors predicts the level of trust with an acceptable level of accuracy. This can be effectively used as an indicator of quality of medical care in the developing country context.