

Research based capacity building of primary health care in Rwanda. A physician assisted, training oriented supervision of health centers. An ongoing study

Background

Evidence shows primary health care is a crucial component in building a cost-effective health system offering equal access to appropriate health services. Rwanda has an extensive primary health care system with health centers nationwide. A national monitoring system requires district hospitals to supervise performance of health centers. At the heart of supervision is a relationship between a supervisor and a supervisee.

There are indications that this relationship in Rwanda is characterized more by inspection and performance evaluation than support and problem solving. Studies are needed in low-resource-settings to describe this and the type of supervision taking place, from the view of both supervisors and supervisees. Also, the role of primary care physicians in supervision is unclear.

Objectives and methods

1) To understand characteristics of supervision of health centers, and the relationship between supervisors and supervisees, through a qualitative study primarily using focus group discussions. This study will guide an intervention: 2) To measure effects of introducing physician-assisted, training-centered supervision at selected health centers. With an interrupted time-series design, changes in indicators over time will be compared to control sites to evaluate the impact of the intervention. This will be accompanied by a cost effectiveness analysis to orient key policy and decision makers.

Perspectives

Many low-income countries spend resources on supervision without clear policies to define the objectives, methods and expectations. Our study will explore methods for training-centered supervision that may be adapted in low-resource settings such as in Rwanda, including what role a primary care physician may play in the supervision team. Results of this study will be included in a strategy for local, national and international advocacy to key decision makers within the healthcare system.