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Poster Abstract

Interaction or self-support? A study of collaboration for integrated care pathways between municipalities

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Abstract

Purpose and background: Health authorities in Norway have by legislation emphasized integrated care within primary health care and between primary and specialist health care. Different models of integrated care have been developed, both disease-based and more general guidelines. With increased patient responsibility in primary care, many municipalities in Norway are challenged to collaborate with each other in order to meet these increasing demands.

Objective: The objective of the study was to investigate whether the municipalities have developed and implemented integrated care pathways and whether they are doing so alone or in interaction with other municipalities one year after the new health legislation to promote interaction in health care.

Methods: The study is based on qualitative data from structured telephone interviews with councillors or other leaders at similar level in all 36 municipalities in Møre and Romsdal county, Norway. The interview guide involved subjects such as; what changes have been made in health care services to comply with the new legislation by health authorities, have the municipality developed, or participated in development of integrated care pathways, are the municipality using integrated care pathways in their health care, and are the municipality collaborating with other municipalities on health care services.

Results: Only a few of the informants answer that they have developed and/or started using integrated care pathways in the municipal care. Most of these municipalities had been included in projects with other municipalities on development of disease-based pathways. Although this may reflect that only a few of the municipalities are working with integrated care the result may also be influenced by the informants' lack of knowledge of the practice field. Several informants state that the integrated care pathways that have been presented to them from other municipalities were too detailed and comprehensive for daily use. Almost all of the informants state that finding their own local solutions is more relevant for them than copying solutions from other municipalities within health care services, also when it comes to developing integrated care pathways.

Discussion and conclusions: Municipalities are at this stage more focused on self-support than interaction with others. The data suggest that municipals are still trying to figure out how to handle

the increased responsibilities they have received, and need to find local solutions to their health care challenges. One of the reasons why municipalities choose to work out their own solutions and services is the long term importance of building internal competence and capacity. Also, it appears that integrated care pathways for municipal use should be general guidelines rather than diseases-based.

Keywords

integrated care pathway, primary health care, collaboration, norway

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