

Conference abstract

Patient choice and health care integration: a review of the consistency between two Swedish policy concepts

Bengt Ahgren, MPolSc, PhD, Senior Lecturer, Nordic School of Public Health, Göteborg, Sweden

Correspondence to: Bengt Ahgren, E-mail: bengt.ahgren@nhv.se

Abstract

Purpose: Despite of an insignificant track record of quasi market models in Sweden, new models of this kind have recently been introduced in health care; commonly referred to as ‘choice of care’. This time citizens act as purchasers; choosing the primary care centre or family physician they want to be treated by, which, in turn, generates a capitation payment to the chosen unit. Policy makers believe that such systems will be self-remedial, that is, as a result of competition the strong providers survive while unprofitable ones will be eliminated. Because of negative consequences of the fragmented health care delivery, policy makers at the same time also promote different forms of integrated health care arrangements. One example is ‘local health care’, which could be described as an upgraded community-oriented primary care, supported by adaptable hospital services, fitting the needs of a local population. This paper reviews if it is possible to combine this kind of integrated care system with a competition driven model of governance, or if they are incompatible.

Theory: Inter-organisational and interprofessional collaboration, accessibility of services, and provider continuity.

Method: Literature-based review.

Results and conclusions: The findings indicate that some choice of care schemes could hamper the development of integration in local health care. However, geographical monopolies like local health care, enclosed in a non-competitive context, lack the stimulus of competition that possibly improves performance. Thus, it could be argued that if choice of care and local health care should be combined, patients ought to choose between integrated health care arrangements and not among individual health professionals.

Keywords

patient choice, local health care, health care policy, Sweden

Presentation slides available from:

<http://www.integratedcare.org/Portals/0/congresses/Finland/Presentations/Ahgren%20presentation.pdf>