

ENDORSEMENT

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Attitudes of Health Care Workers Towards the Use of TQM at
Ramallah and Rafedia Governmental Hospitals on the West Bank.

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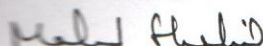
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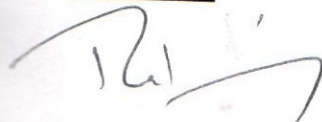
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ABSTRACT

Attitudes of Health Care Workers Towards the Use of TQM at
Ramallah and Rafedia Governmental Hospitals on the West Bank.

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TQM became a watch word in health care since the 1990's - due to the fact that there is a need to produce higher quality outcomes at a lesser cost - involving all human resources in the form of teams, using the scientific approach and increasing the satisfaction of clients.

The Palestinian health care system falls under the burden of the extensive running cost of health care with inefficient outcomes. Therefore, TQM may be one way of overcoming such a serious situation.

The researcher in this study examined the relationship between the health workers' level of education about the content of TQM, their exposure to TQM program teams and their attitudes towards the implementation of TQM at their organizations.

A correlation design was used to study the relationship between the variables - "knowledge exposure" and "attitudes" of health care workers.

The population came from two Governmental Hospitals. The sample from Rafedia Hospital consisted of all sixty two workers who participated in the TQM program, facilitated by the Palestinian Quality Improvement Project.

The sample from Ramallah Hospital consisted of sixty two randomly selected workers who were never involved in any TQM programs.

The researcher personally delivered the five point Likert Type Scale - Questionnaire to all subjects who agreed to participate in the study. 77.4% completed the questionnaire at Ramallah Hospital, while 85.4% completed the questionnaire at Rafedia Hospital. The indicators which measured the effects of the variables were derived from the literature review.

The results showed no significant relationship between the demographic factors and the attitudes of health care workers towards the use of TQM - except for "position" which showed a positive relationship - being weaker amongst managers and physicians and strongest amongst nurses, paramedics and domestic staff.

The striking feature identified by the results of the study was that the amount / level of knowledge and the level of exposure of health care workers to the concept of TQM determined their attitudes towards implementing TQM at their organisations, and the higher the level, the more positive their attitudes became.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

A. Definition

Greater concerns about improvements in the quality of health care have emerged in the early 1980s. Serious attention has been given to the development of approaches and tools for the assessment of change in the quality of health care, with increasing pressure in order to provide quality health care. Total Quality Management (TQM), then became a watch word for health care in the 1990s and is defined by Collard, Sivyer and Deloitte (1990) “as a cost effective system for integrating the continuous quality improvement efforts of people at all levels in an organization to deliver products and services which ensure customer satisfaction”.

There appeared to be different interpretations regarding the definition and the content of this newly emerging concept (TQM)... For example:- Joseph Juran, (1986) defined total quality management “as fitness for purpose”. He advises “balancing marginal costs and benefits of quality improvement”. Deming (1986) believes that management should commit to quality without counting cost. Wilkonson et al, infer that total quality management : “is not a methodology at all, but an attitude”. Maxwell (1984), listed six dimensions of quality that can be modified and developed to reflect local requirements and perspectives: Access to service, relevance to need, effectiveness, equity, social acceptability, efficiency.

Still, all agreed to the fact that cost of poor quality are higher than most people realize.

B. Statement of the Problem

In health care there is a drastic need to produce higher quality outcomes at a lesser cost. The new methods of measuring change in the quality of health care, are ways to achieve better quality.

Implementation of such methods in the form of TQM should involve all the human resource "workers" who are the core of the whole system, and are important contributors to the quality of the output, which is a vital aspect in health care for both clients and workers. Also, implementation requires commitment and favorable attitudes on the part of the health workers. Unfortunately, there is very little data which assess the outcomes of the methods of quality improvement in health care in our setting.

Many international studies were performed to shed the light on how the health workers' knowledge about the content of TQM and exposure to TQM program teams will effect their attitudes towards the implementation of TQM in their organizations.

The researcher replicated these studies with modifications to suit the Palestinian Health Care settings. The study was conducted in two governmental hospitals on the West Bank.

C. Significance of the Problem

Health care is a vital aspect in the lives of the people. The Palestinian Ministry of Health has been facing the burden of the extensive running cost of health care since its existence in 1994. The National Health Plan for the Palestinian People (1994), stated that: "The estimated national health expenditure in 1991 was around 173.6 - 206.6 million US Dollars. The per capital expenditure on health was 95 US Dollars which in total represents 10.5% to 12.6% of the 1991 Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of about

1.7 billion US Dollars.” Comparisons with national expenditures on health care in other neighboring countries like Jordan, Syria, and Egypt indicated that they spend a significantly lesser proportion of their National Product on health care and are obtaining similar health outcomes. This may be due to certain inefficiencies in our health care system.

One way to overcome this serious situation is by introducing total quality management in health care organizations and particularly in the governmental sector, since they are now in a transitional phase with limited resources. They are building an infrastructure with new policies and perspectives. TQM will review processes, identify problems and deal with them using the scientific approach of data collection and statistical analysis, in order to develop team work commitment and involvement, democratization and increased efficiency.

The study focused on how the health care workers' knowledge about the content of TQM and exposure to TQM program teams, will effect their attitudes towards the implementation of TQM in their organizations.

D. The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to examine the relationship between the health workers' level of education about the content of TQM and exposure to TQM program teams and their attitudes towards the implementation of TQM at their organizations.

In other words, the study was concerned with finding that if the level of knowledge and the extent of the exposure of the health care worker to the nature of the TQM program will influence their attitudes towards implementing this program in their organizations.

First, the study presented a descriptive analysis of the:-

1. Workers' knowledge about the concept of TQM.
2. Workers' exposure to the concept of TQM.
3. Workers' attitudes towards the implementation of TQM.

Then, the study examined the relationship between the workers knowledge about, and exposure to the concept of TQM and their attitudes towards the implementation of TQM.

It is worth noting that this study laid the basis for further research on the implementation of TQM. in order to establish an effective, efficient system in the Palestinian Health Care Organizations.

E. Research Questions

The following questions were explored:-

1. What is the effect of knowledge about the concept of TQM on the attitudes of health workers?
2. What is the effect of the exposure of health workers to the concept of TQM on their attitudes?

F. Assumptions of the Research Process

The following assumptions were expected:

1. Health Workers co-operated in filling out the study questionnaire.
2. It was easy to reach the Health Workers at their organizations.
3. Health Workers provided honest responses.
4. The questionnaire yielded reliable measures.

5. The Palestinian Quality Improvement Project offered great assistance to the researcher.

G. Limitations of the Research Process

The following limitations were expected:

1. Unavailability of literature of similar studies on the West Bank.
2. Only three components were studied - knowledge, exposure, and attitudes.
3. Translating the Questionnaire from English into Arabic may yield some misunderstandings since TQM is a new concept and its major terms are not yet professionally translated.

H. Research Concepts

1. Knowledge about the TQM program..
2. Exposure to TQM program teams.
3. Attitude towards implementing TQM.

I. Definition of Research Concepts

Conceptually:-

1. Knowledge: How much one knows about what something means (Oxford Dictionary, 1982).

Knowledge:- is also defined as the workers' extent of information about and level of training in TQM processes.

The levels are represented as follows:-

- a) Low level: Initial training over a period of 1-3 days "attending a workshop".

it, facilitated and mentored by experts, thus inducing a climate of positive attitudes towards implementing TQM at the Organizations.

Section IV - Implications and Recommendations

The study identified using statistical analysis that knowledge of the concept of TQM and exposure to it influenced positively the attitudes of Health Care workers towards the use of TQM at their Organizations.

It was clearly seen that workers who received courses by experts in TQM and practiced under their supervision developed good understanding of the concept which resulted in having positive attitudes towards its implementation.

When the Palestinian Ministry of Health determines the need for applying TQM within the Health Care System in order to deliver high quality health care at a lower cost. It is necessary to use experts in this field to train and to mentor the workers prior to implementing TQM in the Organizations.

TQM will succeed only when all workers, starting from Top Management down, understand and grasp the concept well - when Executive Directors are committed to allow everyone in their organization a chance to be involved in decision making and problem solving - when Managers facilitate and coach TQM teams - when external and internal clients are satisfied - when everyone believes in the democratization of science - when the scientific approach is used to identify variations.

The Health Care System in Palestine will definitely be able to deliver high quality services to its internal and external clients at a much lesser cost when TQM as a system is implemented properly, objectively and scientifically at all levels of health care and to all levels of health care workers.

Recommendations:-

Health Care services are one of the most important and most expensive aspects that governments have to cope with. In Palestine, a large amount of money is spent on health care, and the quality of the outcomes are not satisfying if compared with other neighboring countries.

TQM becomes vital in our case and implementing it within the Health Care System becomes a necessity in order to increase the quality of health care at a lower cost.

To do so, the researcher offered the following recommendations:-

1 - Health Care / Education

It is necessary that Educational Institutions giving undergraduate degrees in medicine, nursing, or any other paramedical field - integrate into their curricula the theory of TQM - ensuring that Health Care workers understand the concept and are ready to practice it at the Health Care Organizations.

Besides, experts at the health care settings should offer regular courses and training in TQM through continued education at regular intervals, in order to facilitate knowledge and exposure to all workers, allowing them to fully understand the concept of TQM and to share as active members in the quality teams with commitment and confidence.

2 - Health care / Practice and Management

Health Care workers are practicing at Organizations with a dominant autocratic culture - where power and authority lies only in the hands of the Managers and the Directors - they alone would give the orders - they alone would make the decisions...

“Satisfaction of internal clients is not an issue of concern”....

Under such circumstances TQM is difficult to establish since it encourages democratization of knowledge and uses team approach to run the Organization.

Therefore, it is necessary for the Management groups to understand fully that TQM begins at the “TOP” - they are the ones to coach and to mentor - by using empowerment and by allowing everyone in the organizations to share actively in quality teams.

When managers adopt TQM, they will also facilitate for the workers, the problem solving approach and will assist them in making their own decisions - thus producing a climate of commitment and satisfaction, in order to attain high quality health care at minimum cost.

It was worth noting here, that the way to establish TQM at all health care settings in Palestine and involving all health care workers starting from the top management down, is by the support of the Ministry of Health - who will induce TQM as a system in health care.

3 - The researcher finally recommended that this study should be used as a baseline for further research in the field of TQM - since such a concept seemed to be a perfect approach to increase quality of health care provided at a lesser cost - a vital necessity for the Palestinian Health Care System.