



Development of and Adherence to Guidelines for Efficient and Effective Pharmaceutical Services: A Strategy to Increase Access to Essential Medicines in Church-Related Health Facilities in sub-Saharan Africa

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Background

Members of the Ecumenical Pharmaceutical Network (EPN) identified recommended procedures and resources that need to be in place in pharmaceutical church-related health services (CHS) in order to ensure access to essential medicines for the institutions and their clients.

Objectives

To increase access to essential medicines by developing guidelines for efficient and effective pharmaceutical services and by promoting and facilitating church-related health services' adherence to these guidelines.

Method

EPN members themselves were to establish and agree upon guidelines and indicators to be used. Baseline studies are to be carried out for existing compliance with guidelines, with the help of four different tools (self-assessment of CHS; desk review on national background for CHS; guided self-assessment for CHS; self-assessment survey for drug supply organizations [DSOs]). CHS staff and church leaders as community representatives are to be included in the guided self-assessment.

Results

A set of 25 guidelines for effective and efficient pharmaceutical services was established by a selection of EPN members (Technical Working Group) and indicators allocated by EPN participants at a DSO meeting. Four assessment tools were field-tested. Ten staff from CHS (groups of two from five different countries) were trained to become facilitators to undertake a baseline study in their respective countries (Malawi, Tanzania, Ghana, Cameroon, and Togo) with the help of these tools. One baseline study was established in Malawi (results expected in June 2005); four more are planned for 2005 and early 2006.



Conclusion (tentative)

A baseline for all CHS activities in a country offers clear indications and priorities for how to proceed in order to raise the level of services and improve access to essential medicines. The results are the key to developing country-specific plans, exchanging cross-country experiences, and enabling impact evaluation and monitoring, as well as to providing information for decision making.

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