

Formation of Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committees in the Dominican Republic as an Academic Requirement for a Course on Rational Medicine Use



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Background

The Universidad Central del Este de República Dominicana (Central University of the Eastern Dominican Republic) conducted a certificate course on rational medicine use in 2016 with the help of the Systems for Improved Access to Pharmaceuticals and Services (SIAPS) Program, financed by the US Agency for International Development. Its blended training method allowed 32 students to strengthen their theoretical knowledge with operational research in the workplace and classroom discussions of their findings and options for addressing problems detected.

As part of the “Pharmaceutical Management Cycle and Supply Integration in the Dominican Republic” module, the students set up 13 Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committees (PTCs) at 11 hospitals and two Regional Health Services that would oversee their on-the-job training for the duration of the certificate course and serve as mechanisms for the implementation of measures for improving medicine use.

Methodology

The students were instructed to review the literature on the benefits of having a PTC at a health care facility and on current rules and regulations governing the organization and operation of hospital-based and regional PTCs in the Dominican Republic. During classroom sessions, they discussed strategies for approaching facility officials, creating and filling positions, and training the PTC members to perform their duties.

Findings

During the two-week on-the-job training period for this module, the 32 students assigned to 11 hospitals and two Regional Health Services created 13 PTCs. To this end, the students met with the directors of their respective facilities, presenting technical and administrative arguments in support of the formation of a PTC. Following this presentation, the directors appointed the committee members, who were then trained to perform their duties in keeping with national guidelines. No problems were reported with the formation of these PTCs, and each group of students met its goal of installing the committee by the agreed deadline.

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In the nine weeks following their formation, the PTCs provided the students in the certificate course with technical and administrative assistance in completing the various tasks involved in the remaining course modules, including analyses of medicine purchases and consumption and prescribing practices and medicine use studies. Working with the students and facility officials, the PTCs designed and implemented various measures aimed at addressing problems detected with respect to medicine use.

Analysis and Discussion

Setting up a PTC and keeping it going is difficult work. Around 2004, about 17 hospital-based PTCs were formed in the Dominican Republic, none of which were still systematically operating in 2015. The short life span and limited impact of these PTCs were a result of the lack of administrative support from hospital management and of the absence of tools and knowledge needed for the performance of their work.

The Dominican Republic has been phasing in an Integrated Medicine and Medical Supply Management System (known as SUGEMI) since 2010 with assistance from the SIAPS Program. As part of this operation, it revised and published its Basic List of Essential Medicines in 2015 and is producing regular consumption and inventory data serving as the basis for detecting and better addressing problems with respect to medicine use. The Ministry of Public Health, in turn, has revised and updated treatment protocols for the main types of services provided at the country's health care facilities.

The certificate course on rational medicine use employed these tools both in the training of students enrolled in the course and, as part of its practical application component, in the training of PTC members and for the coordination of operational research and implementation of corrective measures for problems detected.

We believe that the formation of the PTCs was facilitated by SUGEMI's good reputation with health officials and technicians in the Dominican Republic, the use of a systematic approach to the organization of these committees, and by the students' interest in accomplishing this task as a requirement for completing their on-the-job training and, ultimately, for passing the certificate course.

These newly formed PTCs have administrative backing and technical tools that were unavailable to the previous committees. In addition, the certificate course helped the 13 new PTCs identify specific problems at their respective facilities and devise alternative solutions for addressing them. The combined effects of this administrative support and technical know-how, the use of appropriate work tools, and the attendance at future certificate courses by additional facility staff members should help keep these latest PTCs in the Dominican Republic operational and make their work more effective.

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