

6 Ways to Make Your Workforce More Flexible



Healthcare workers tend to work in an environment which comes with many professional boundaries. These boundaries often limit their ability to treat and diagnose patients due to restricted access to specific skills, technologies and services. They also reduce workforce flexibility and introduce inefficiencies due to a negative impact on workforce responsiveness.

However, new models of care are now being introduced to enhance workforce flexibility and to enable existing staff to work to their full scope of practice. These new models also aim to extend the roles of these workers.

In particular, there are six specific principles that could potentially enhance health workforce flexibility. These include:

1. Measure health system performance from the perspective of the patient.
2. Minimise training times.
3. Regulate tasks (competencies), not professions.
4. Match rewards and indemnity to the levels of skill and risk required to perform a particular task, not professional title.
5. Ensure that practitioners have all the skills they need to perform the tasks required to work in the environment in which they work
6. Enable practitioners to work to their full scope of practice delegate tasks where required

While many of these principles challenge the traditional norms of healthcare delivery, it is possible that their implementation could go a long way in increasing organizational efficiency as well as help meet the challenge of workforce shortages. Many of these strategies could also enable healthcare workers to better meet patient needs since the concept of providing truly accessible care means that patients have access to appropriate health care at the right time in the right place.

Due to increasing workforce shortages in healthcare, there have been efforts to remove legal and professional barriers so that the entire system of delivery of care becomes more flexible. However, most of these efforts have been at a small scale and more localised. But some of this effort has trickled down and has provided some flexibility, although unintended. For example outbreaks of disease and policy changes resulted in the implementation of the European Working Time Directive that placed a cap on the maximum number of working hours for doctors; or the introduction of new managerialism in the National Health Services (NHS) that nabbed podiatry surgeons to compete with orthopaedic surgeons. Though on a small scale, there have been efforts to shift from a profession-centric approach to a patient-focused one.

It is quite easy to understand that with appropriate training and supervision, it is possible for health-care to be delivered by more than one type of practitioner. The flexibility from healthcare has been minimised because of the normative model of health workforce which simply assumes that only the right type of practitioner can deliver specific type of care. This assumption has resulted in decreasing the efficiency of the healthcare system. It is about time the system becomes more flexible and more open to adopting a new approach to improve the delivery of quality care.

Source: [Human Resources for Health](#)

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