

Leadership in Healthcare



According to a systematic review of 45 studies, leadership development programmes for physicians are associated with increased self-assessed knowledge and expertise. The review was conducted by Professor Jan Frich at University of Oslo and colleagues at Yale School of Public Health and is published in the Journal of General Internal Medicine.

The purpose of the review was to characterise the setting, content, and methods used for teaching and the learning outcomes that were achieved. Articles on the 45 studies were identified through a search in Ovid Medline and ranged from 1950 to 2013. Of the 45 studies, 35 reported on programmes that were exclusively designed for physicians.

Few studies to date have examined programme outcomes at an organisational level. Common topics that are usually included in the curricula are leadership, teamwork, financial management, self-management, conflict management, quality improvement, communication, and health policy/strategy.

The primary goal of physician leadership development programmes is to strengthen leadership competencies and improve organisational performance. Most of the programmes included in the review used multiple learning methods including action learning projects, group work, lectures and seminars. The review suggests that there are significant gaps such as a lack of reports on programmes that integrate non-physician and physician professionals as well as limited use of interactive learning and feedback to develop greater self-awareness. There is also a very narrow focus on individual level outcomes as compared to system-level outcomes.

The review shows that most of the programmes focused on skills training and technical and conceptual knowledge. Very few programmes focused on personal growth and awareness. Only six studies documented favourable organisational outcomes, such as improvement in quality indicators for disease management.

The review also shows that the majority of the programmes targeted physicians and did not include any participation from other professional groups within the healthcare organisation. This could potentially result in missed opportunities for developing collaboration across professional lines which is critical for team-based leadership.

Overall, the review suggests that leadership programmes targeting physicians focus more on the "know" and "do" elements of leadership and ignore the "be" element which is fundamental for effective leadership.

Source: University of Oslo

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