Integrated Care in Kosovo: Challenges for Primary Health Care

**AQH Project**

The Accessible Quality Healthcare (AQH) project is designed to support the implementation of the national reform agenda and complement other donor-supported programmes with a focus on the Primary Health Care (PHC) level and non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

With its three outcomes the project aims to stimulate use of quality primary health care services by all Kosovo citizens, with particular attention to the needs and inclusion of socially vulnerable populations.

**Purpose of the study**

To understand the current challenges for the delivery of integrated primary health care services within health system and with other sectors, particularly integration of health and social services, in order to identify ways that these challenges can most effectively be addressed.

**Study method**

Cross-sectional qualitative study
- Literature review
- Review of data from earlier ‘Barriers to Access’ Study
- In-depth interviews with key informants
- Focus group discussions

Data analysis was targeted and designed to inform project planning and decision-making.

**Challenges**

**Staff Capacity**
- Lack of training and motivation
- Lack of doctors
- Limited nursing role
- Inefficient distribution of staff
- Few outreach or home visits because of inadequate staffing

**Health Information**
- Different data reported by different institutions
- Health Information System (HIS) is predominantly paper-based
- Poor quality data
- Patients registered in multiple facilities

**Referral Systems**
- Patients can self-refer to primary, secondary and private sectors
- No referral from hospitals back to PHC
- Doctors under pressure from patients to refer to hospital

**Clinical Records**
- Each attendance is recorded as a new episode of care
- Records often not available during consultation

**Infrastructure**
- Varies across facilities
- Patients sent to hospital or private sector when equipment is not available or is non-functional

**Systems**
- No system for patient registration with a single PHC provider
- PHC not yet fulfilling a ‘gate-keeper’ role
- Guidelines and protocols out of date or not implemented

**Opportunities**

The new Health Sector Strategy promotes ‘an integrated community-based approach spanning health, education and economic empowerment’

Kosovo already has decentralized responsibility for PHC

Establishment of the new Health Insurance Fund provides a forum for cross-sectoral integration of services

The new HIS will provide better health data and improve medical record-keeping

A strong legal framework is already in place

**Conclusions**

Lack of clarity about integrated care, is it...
- integration between primary, secondary and tertiary care?
- integration between health and other sectors?

Some good examples of services being integrated but they are usually project driven and seldom sustained

Current legislation does not prohibit the delivery of integrated services…but it does not actively encourage it

**Next steps**

International conference to raise awareness of the concepts of Integrated Care

Stakeholder working group to develop a model for Integrated Care in Kosovo

Pilot model in one project Municipality

Evaluation of the pilot and agree next steps