

Editorial for the Special Issue on “The Role of Accreditation in Improving Healthcare Systems Performance”

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Dear Editor,

The World Health Organization's annual report in 2000 sparked a global trend of assessing and improving healthcare performance indicators. These performance indicators provide tangible measures of the performance of health systems and healthcare institutions. Ranking countries based on these indicators has been a smart and strategic decision to focus the attention of health managers and policymakers on improving them. These performance indicators include quality, safety, equity, public health coverage, service continuity, comprehensiveness, accessibility, and etc. These indicators' positive trajectory demonstrates the gradual attainment of the health system's mission and objectives. An often-seen strategic error in health system administration, particularly in developing nations, is the excessive allocation of funds to physical infrastructure and the acquisition of costly equipment. This expense diminishes the resources that could be allocated to performance indicators improvement (1).

An effective and efficient method to enhance the concentration of managers and staff in healthcare facilities on performance indicators and their constant, targeted efforts to strengthen them is to include requirements of these indicators into accreditation standards or assessment measures. Accreditation is a commonly used method for evaluation of health systems. It involves an external peer committee assessing an organization's performance to see if it aligns with set requirements, which are considered to be the best practices. If the organization being examined satisfactorily fulfills the predetermined requirements and expectations, it will undoubtedly achieve the appropriate certification. In addition, the score attained by the organization influences the

classification and duration of accreditation approval (2).

Research on the impact of accreditation on healthcare facilities' status suggests that this strategy has effectively improved vital performance metrics, particularly in quality and safety in hospital care, primary healthcare, and ambulatory care. These accomplishments frequently stem from essential enhancements in infrastructure, specifically in strengthening corporate and improve culture. The effectiveness of an accreditation program in enhancing performance indicators relies on several factors, including the suitability of the evaluation model in terms of its focus on these indicators, the excellence of the implementation processes of the accreditation program, the expertise of evaluators and the accreditation team, the level of integration of the quality improvement culture in that domain, the establishment of essential educational and legal infrastructures, and the appropriate alignment of accreditation outcomes with individual and organizational motivations (3, 4).

A retrospective analysis of the development of accreditation reveals that it was first introduced in 1912 by the American College of Surgeons, and the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) was subsequently established as the initial accrediting body in the United States. Since then, there has been a substantial proliferation of accreditation programs globally, particularly during the 1990s. This growth was maintained until the Primary Healthcare Certification model was introduced in 2008, and the first assessment was conducted in 2012. The implementation of accreditation has effectively enhanced the performance of healthcare institutions, and this beneficial influence continues to evolve via the incorporation of insights from worldwide



experiences. The compelling evidence from these accomplishments and encounters prompted accreditation to expand its scope beyond healthcare delivery to encompass education, namely medical education, as well as administrative and industrial systems. It is important to note that accreditation, unlike other evaluation methods like licensure and certification, has achieved significant accomplishments in the healthcare field. This is because accreditation is better suited to the healthcare sector and focuses on procedural and outcome-based optimal standards (4, 5).

Therefore, in today's world, adopting accreditation in all healthcare organizations and their affiliated units and benefiting from its undeniable capabilities are essential. However, the extent to which these capabilities and potential benefits are realized depends on various factors, such as the proper design and implementation of accreditation programs. The use of guidelines from the International Society for Quality in Health Care (ISQua) as the primary custodian of accreditation programs worldwide, which are based on global experiences, will be of paramount importance (6, 7).

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