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***NATIONAL/REGIONAL
HEALTH PROMOTING
HOSPITALS
NETWORK
COORDINATORS:
THE NATIONAL
NETWORKS
STRATEGY***

Report on a WHO Workshop

Hildesheim, Germany
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HOSPITAL CARE

By the year 2000, hospitals in all Member States should be providing cost-effective secondary and tertiary care and contribute actively to improving health status and patient satisfaction.

ABSTRACT

Representatives from all the EU countries and national coordinators from the Health Promoting Hospitals (HPH) networks in Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland and Catalonia (Spain) were present. The discussions concentrated on developing the national/regional networks. It was concluded that there should be only one international HPH network, with possibilities for different types of membership. Application for international membership in countries where a national or regional network existed should be made through the local network. In countries where local networks did not exist, international membership would continue as at present.

Variations should be accepted in the way national/regional networks worked, in order that they be allowed to develop their own identity according to local circumstances. Some common rules should apply, however, such as those concerning membership. Participants were asked for their comments on the prepared WHO agreement document for national/regional networks. WHO would be ultimately responsible for international coordination and would support international conferences and workshops. The Ludwig Boltzmann Institute in Vienna would act as secretariat to the international network, maintaining the database and the newsletter.

Keywords

HEALTH PROMOTION – organization and administration
HOSPITALS – trends
EUROPE

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INTRODUCTION

The Workshop started with an introduction by Dr Mila Garcia-Barbero, highlighting the most important issues concerning the strategic development of national and regional WHO networks of the Health Promoting Hospitals (HPH).

The establishment of national/regional networks is an important step in the further development of the Health Promoting Hospitals project. The concept of Health Promoting Hospitals has already proven to be successful in the implementation of change in hospitals towards health, both in the European Pilot Hospitals Project and in the International Network of Health Promoting Hospitals. Therefore, a key strategy to broaden the impact of HPH in the next few years should be the implementation of national/regional networks all over Europe. Specific objectives are:

- to promote the development of projects aimed at the facilitation of health promotion in the hospitals and the local community;
- to facilitate and encourage cooperation and the exchange of experiences and programmes, among participating hospitals;
- to share experiences and programmes making use more effective of resources;
- to identify areas of common interest for the development of programmes and evaluating procedures;
- to increase communication between the hospitals.

According to the objectives of Health Promoting Hospitals, national/regional networks should undertake initiatives to improve:

- the wellbeing of staff and patients
- the quality of services
- prevention, health education and rehabilitation
- sanitation and protection of the environment
- relations with the community and social institutions
- the coordination between Primary Health Care and Hospital Care.

In addition to the Pilot Hospitals Project and the other HPH strategies, the development of national/regional networks will become more and more the central strategic approach of WHO, towards the development of Health Promoting Hospitals. At the level of coordination, it will be necessary for each of these strategies to have a coordinating institution, one that will have an agreement with WHO, regarding responsibilities and rules concerning development and action.

As the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for the Sociology of Health and Medicine (LBI) acts as International Coordinating Centre and Secretariat, it was suggested that LBI in the future should integrate the International Coordination of the national/regional networks in its tasks.

The implementation of this strategy has membership consequences. In countries with existing national or regional networks, local membership will now include indirect membership of the international network, and there will be no direct access for membership. In countries where national or regional networks are not yet established, conditions for international membership will continue as they are now. However, during the transition phases, special solutions will have to be developed.

DISCUSSION: NETWORKING THE NETWORKS

The discussion revealed a basic agreement with the objectives and aims of the strategy, including the need for international coordination of the national/regional networks. The International Coordination should support the networks by coordinating international conferences, international business meetings of national/regional coordinators and international newsletters, generation of a database and the provision of information and access to national/regional networks.

AGREEMENTS

There was general agreement that variations should be accepted in the way national/regional networks work, in order that they be allowed to develop their own identity according to local circumstances. On the other hand, it is necessary that some common rules of the networks be shared (membership, etc.), and that regulations concerning these rules and responsibilities be agreed. Participants were asked for their comments on the prepared WHO Agreement document for national/regional networks. This document contains a minimal agreement basis for WHO national/regional networks, but can be adapted according to local circumstances and specifications.

The organization of the networks should not be too rule-oriented, as this might create a rather hierarchical pattern.

OPTIONS FOR PILOT HOSPITALS OF THE EPHP

There was some discussion concerning the future role of the pilot hospitals of the EPHP. Different options were mentioned. Pilot hospitals can choose between the following options:

- to act as national or regional coordinating institutions of the networks, as they already do in some cases;
- to support the development of national or regional networks at different stages, if necessary helping to find a coordinating institution;
- to act as pilot hospitals in the networks, contributing models of good practice and supporting other hospitals through membership of the national/regional network.

ROLE OF NATIONAL COORDINATING INSTITUTIONS (NCIS)

Further discussion concentrated on the role of the national coordinating institution. Nomination of the national coordinating institution was stated to be a crucial point in the development of the network as a whole. WHO suggested that a proposal has to be primarily agreed on the national or regional level and then approved by WHO.

Concern was expressed in relation to responsibility of the NCIs to compile regular reports, including the development of the member hospitals. Many believed that this would create a lot of administration work, particularly for those requiring English translations. If regular reports are to be obligatory, then regular feedback must be guaranteed. It was agreed that the concept of reporting and the development of an international database, required further clarification and should to be discussed again at the next workshop.

The question was raised as to whether national members should be required to establish links with scientific institutions. This was considered advantageous but should not be obligatory. However, it was considered to be extremely desirable for NCIs to establish such links, in order to provide member hospitals with appropriate knowledge and support with regard to evaluation.

Reports from different countries show not only the enormous interest that exists, but the wide variation in approaches used to initiate national and regional networks.

DECISIONS

The first Workshop ended with the following decisions:

1. There should be a final discussion phase of the agreements for coordinating institutions and member hospitals by the end of 1995. WHO invites comments from all participants.
2. After this date, the formal process of signing the agreements will be initiated.
3. The acknowledgement of member hospitals can officially start following the formal recognition of a national/regional coordinating institution.
4. In countries where national networks are established, membership of the International HPH Network will only be possible via membership of the national/regional networks.
5. The second Workshop of Coordinators of National/Regional HPH Networks will take place on 20 April 1996 in Londonderry (Fourth International Conference).

Annex I

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