

VIII. Streszczenie w języku angielskim

ABSTRACT

Introduction

Quality of care is the degree to which healthcare services for individuals and populations increase the likelihood of achieving desired health outcomes. Measuring the quality of care is a complex process because there are many different aspects of care that need to be considered when systematically assessing it. Additionally, the definition of quality of care may vary depending on the patient, facility, or healthcare system, posing a significant challenge in the measurement process. Different participants in the system may focus on different aspects of care. Another challenge in measuring the quality of care is that some important aspects, such as empathy and communication, are difficult to measure. Furthermore, the quality of care may vary over time; for example, a patient may be satisfied with the care received during a hospital stay but dissatisfied with the care received after discharge. Despite these challenges, there are various ways to measure quality, as described in this thesis. One of the most commonly used methods is the use of quality indicators—measurable values that can be used to compare the quality of care in different healthcare facilities or over different periods.

The year 2023 was undoubtedly a breakthrough year in terms of legal regulations related to quality. Currently, the Polish healthcare system faces challenges in transitioning from the theoretical plane to the practical one in monitoring and evaluating quality. Based on the experiences of countries that have been systematically assessing healthcare quality for years, this thesis attempts to assess the impact of changes in the collection and publication of information on quality on decisions made by future patients. Will the decision-making model regarding the choice of hospital change, and what potential consequences may be associated with it for the system?

Purpose of the study

The main research problem in this thesis is to determine the factors influencing decisions made by patients regarding the choice of hospital and to determine the importance of healthcare quality for them. Establishing these factors can be of practical significance because they provide an opportunity to tailor published content to patient expectations and may influence the perception of planning hospital distribution and contracting services. The primary research objectives are:

- Determine what factors guide consumers in choosing a hospital under conditions of complete freedom of choice, considering their knowledge of the quality of medical services in various hospitals.
- Find answers to how Poles understand high-quality healthcare.
- Identify potential consequences related to the publication of quality data for the Polish healthcare system.

Materials and Methods

The study included 2,196 Polish citizens aged 18 and older. The sample structure corresponded to the surveyed population in terms of age groups (18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, and 65 and older), gender, size of the place of residence, region of residence, and level of education. The study sample constituted a representative sample of the Polish population. All participants were informed about the purpose and method of the study. Respondents voluntarily consented to participate in the research project, and all data obtained from participants were anonymous. The study was conducted from June 28 to 30, 2023, using the Computer-Assisted Web Interviewing (CAWI) method on the ReaktorOpinii.pl research panel. The study was based on an author-designed questionnaire covering questions about defining high-quality healthcare, patients' past experiences, and their future preferences for choosing a hospital.

Results

The paper contains the results of the conducted analyses, and most of the hypotheses were positively verified—either in full or in part. It was demonstrated that there is a relationship between an increase in waiting time for planned hospitalization in a highly rated hospital and a decrease in requirements for the hospital's quality. The relationship between an increase in the distance of a highly-rated hospital from the place of residence and a decrease in requirements for the hospital's quality was also confirmed. Furthermore, it was proven that sociodemographic factors (except gender) and the condition directly causing hospitalization affect the perception of high-quality healthcare. It was also demonstrated that the hospital's expertise (high ranking) is a significant decision-making factor in choosing a healthcare provider, more important than the distance from the hospital to the place of residence or its size. However, it is less important than a short waiting time for treatment. The results obtained in the study, along with the literature review, indicate that publishing qualitative data about medical facilities to the public may have a significant impact on decisions about choosing a hospital made by future patients.

Conclusions

Based on the research results and literature data, the following conclusions were formulated:

1. In the process of developing tools for providing information about hospital quality to the public, it seems justified to integrate the ranking system with the treatment schedule information provided by the National Health Fund.
2. It seems justified for the amount of contracts for healthcare services and the size of hospitals, and thus the number of specialists available in them, to take into account patients' willingness to travel additional distances to receive higher-quality healthcare.
3. Governments and healthcare management institutions, having information about quality, can make more effective decisions regarding resource allocation, funding, and strategic planning.
4. Changes introduced in the Polish health care system in the area of publishing information on the quality of health care in individual hospitals should take into account the individual needs of patients as to the scope of published information.
5. Beyond the scope of qualitative data that will be made public, another important aspect is the way in which this information is conveyed. The key and most challenging task after developing healthcare quality indicators and methods of calculation is to present them in a way that is useful for the recipient.
6. From the patients' perspective, cooperation between all institutions and teams responsible for developing solutions in the field of monitoring healthcare quality, and thus also developing quality indicators, to be used in the Polish healthcare system, seems crucial.
7. Public availability of information about healthcare quality creates competition between institutions. Competition can be a stimulus for continuous improvement of standards, procedures, and clinical outcomes.
8. Public availability of information about healthcare quality makes medical institutions more willing to transparently present their results. This, in turn, contributes to greater accountability of healthcare institutions for the quality of services provided.
9. Public availability of information about the quality of health care also carries certain risks. One of them is the risk of incorrect interpretation of information by patients.