

EMPOWERING WELL-BEING: STRATEGIES FOR ELEVATING HEALTHCARE QUALITY AND BOOSTING HEALTH CONSCIOUSNESS

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Abstract

The article "Empowering Well-Being: Strategies for Elevating Healthcare Quality and Boosting Health Consciousness" examines the critical components of enhancing healthcare quality and increasing public health awareness. It highlights the importance of understanding healthcare quality, including global standards and benchmarks, and assesses the current state of public health awareness, particularly in the context of misinformation and the influence of social media. The article proposes various strategies to improve healthcare quality, focusing on patient care, technological innovation, and professional training. It also emphasizes the role of educational initiatives, public health campaigns, and media collaboration in raising health consciousness. Additionally, the article presents case studies demonstrating successful models of healthcare improvement and effective health awareness campaigns. It addresses challenges such as financial constraints, cultural factors, and regulatory hurdles, offering insights into overcoming these barriers. The conclusion looks toward the future of healthcare and health awareness, considering the potential impact of AI and digital health. This article serves as a comprehensive resource for healthcare professionals, policymakers, and the general public interested in advancing healthcare quality and health awareness.

Keywords: Healthcare Quality, Health Awareness, Patient Care, Public Health Campaigns, Health Education, Technological Innovation in Healthcare, AI and Digital Health.

INTRODUCTION

In an era where health challenges are becoming increasingly complex and diverse, the significance of elevating healthcare quality and enhancing public health consciousness cannot be overstated. Healthcare quality, defined as the degree to which health services increase the likelihood of desired health outcomes and are consistent with current professional knowledge, is a cornerstone of effective healthcare systems (Institute of Medicine, 2001). This focus on quality is essential for ensuring patient safety, improving health outcomes, and optimizing the use of resources.

The World Health Organization (WHO) emphasizes that quality healthcare should be safe, effective, timely, efficient, equitable, and people-centered (WHO, 2020). However, achieving these standards globally remains a challenge. In many regions, healthcare systems struggle with issues such as inadequate infrastructure, limited access to essential services, and a shortage of trained healthcare professionals (Braithwaite et al., 2018).

Simultaneously, the rise of the internet and social media has dramatically influenced public health awareness. While these platforms have the potential to disseminate valuable health information rapidly, they also pose the risk of spreading misinformation. A study by Chou et al. (2018) highlighted the impact of social media on health behaviors and beliefs, underscoring the need for accurate and accessible health information.

The importance of public health awareness is further accentuated by the ongoing global health crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which has demonstrated the critical role of informed public behavior in managing health emergencies (Zarocostas, 2020). The pandemic has brought to light the importance of health literacy, not only for individual well-being but also for community health and the effectiveness of public health interventions (Paakkari & Okan, 2020).

In light of these challenges, there is an urgent need for multifaceted strategies to improve healthcare quality and enhance health consciousness. This involves not only investing in healthcare infrastructure and workforce but also leveraging technology and innovation to make healthcare more accessible and effective. Digital health solutions, for instance, have shown promise in enhancing healthcare delivery and patient engagement (Agarwal et al., 2020).

Moreover, it is vital to develop targeted public health campaigns and educational programs to foster a more health-conscious society. These initiatives should aim to provide accurate, clear, and actionable health information to the public, empowering individuals to make informed health decisions.

This article aims to explore the various strategies and initiatives that can be employed to enhance healthcare quality and increase health awareness. By examining successful case studies, addressing current challenges, and looking ahead to future possibilities, this piece seeks to contribute to the ongoing dialogue among healthcare professionals, policymakers, and the public about improving health outcomes and fostering a health-conscious society.

Understanding healthcare quality

Understanding healthcare quality involves a multi-dimensional perspective, integrating various aspects of care that collectively contribute to the effectiveness, safety, and efficiency of health services. The Institute of Medicine (IOM) has set forth a well-recognized definition, describing healthcare quality as "the degree to which health services for individuals and populations increase the likelihood of desired health outcomes and are consistent with current professional knowledge" (Institute of Medicine, 2001).

Central to this concept is patient safety, which is paramount in any healthcare setting. As highlighted by the World Health Organization (WHO), safety is a critical component of quality care, emphasizing the need to avoid harm to patients during the process of healthcare delivery (WHO, 2020). This aspect gained significant attention following landmark studies, such as the report "To Err Is Human" by the IOM, which revealed the substantial impact of medical errors on patient morbidity and mortality (Kohn, Corrigan, & Donaldson, 2000).

Effectiveness is another crucial dimension, referring to providing care processes and achieving outcomes as supported by scientific evidence. The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) stresses the importance of evidence-based practices in enhancing healthcare quality by ensuring that patients receive interventions proven to yield positive outcomes (AHRQ, 2021).

Equity in healthcare is increasingly recognized as a fundamental component of quality. It involves providing care that does not vary in quality because of personal characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, geographic location, and socioeconomic status. Disparities in healthcare have been a longstanding concern, as noted in various studies and reports, necessitating a more equitable approach to healthcare delivery (Braveman & Gruskin, 2003).

Timeliness and efficiency are also integral to quality healthcare. Timeliness refers to reducing waits and sometimes harmful delays for both those who receive and those who give care. Efficiency denotes the avoidance of waste, including waste of equipment, supplies, ideas, and energy. The pursuit of efficiency and timeliness often involves the implementation of health information technology and systems designed to streamline care processes and enhance communication among healthcare providers (Bates & Gawande, 2003).

Lastly, healthcare must be patient-centered, respecting and responding to individual patient preferences, needs, and values. The concept of patient-centered care advocates for strong patient engagement and participation in their healthcare decisions, an approach that has been linked to improved health outcomes and patient satisfaction (Epstein & Street, 2011).

In conclusion, understanding healthcare quality requires a comprehensive view that encompasses safety, effectiveness, equity, timeliness, efficiency, and patient-centeredness. Continuous efforts in research, policymaking, and practice are essential to advance these dimensions and thus improve overall healthcare quality.

The current state of health awareness

The current state of health awareness is a complex and dynamic field, influenced by various factors ranging from individual knowledge to global health trends and the impact of digital media. Understanding this landscape is crucial for developing strategies to enhance public health literacy and promote informed health decisions.

A foundational aspect of health awareness is the public's knowledge and understanding of health issues. Despite advancements in medical science and health education, gaps in health literacy persist. The National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) in the United States reported that only 12 percent of adults had proficient health literacy, indicating a significant need for improved health education (Kutner et al., 2006). Health literacy extends beyond individual knowledge; it encompasses the ability to access, understand, evaluate, and use health information to make informed decisions (Nutbeam, 2008).

The rise of digital media, particularly social media, has dramatically changed the landscape of health information dissemination. While it offers unparalleled opportunities for public health education and engagement, it also poses challenges due to the spread of misinformation. A study by Chou et al. (2018) highlighted how health misinformation on social media can influence health behaviors and beliefs, leading to potential public health risks. This underscores the need for accurate, reliable, and accessible health information.

Global health trends, such as the rise of non-communicable diseases and the impact of environmental factors on health, also shape public health awareness. The World Health Organization (WHO) has emphasized the importance of raising awareness about lifestyle-related health risks, including those associated with diet, physical inactivity, and substance use (WHO, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has further brought global attention to the importance of health awareness, demonstrating the critical role of public understanding in managing health emergencies (Zarocostas, 2020).

Health education and public health campaigns play a vital role in improving health awareness. These initiatives aim to provide the public with the knowledge and skills needed to make informed health decisions. For instance, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the U.S. conducts various health education campaigns addressing issues from chronic diseases to infectious disease prevention (CDC, 2021).

In conclusion, the current state of health awareness is influenced by a myriad of factors, including individual health literacy, the impact of digital media, global health trends, and the effectiveness of health education campaigns. Addressing these challenges requires concerted efforts from healthcare providers, educators, policymakers, and the media to enhance the public's ability to access, understand, and utilize health information.

Strategies to Enhance Healthcare Quality

Enhancing healthcare quality is a multifaceted endeavor that requires a coordinated approach involving various stakeholders, including healthcare providers, policymakers, patients, and the broader community. Several strategies have been identified and implemented to improve the quality of healthcare delivery and outcomes.

- 1. Improving Patient Care and Safety:** Central to enhancing healthcare quality is the focus on patient care and safety. This involves the implementation of evidence-based practices, which are interventions and procedures proven to be effective through rigorous scientific research. The Institute of Medicine's landmark report, "To Err Is Human," highlighted the importance of reducing medical errors and implementing systems to improve patient safety (Kohn, Corrigan, & Donaldson, 2000).
- 2. Technology and Innovation in Healthcare:** The integration of technology and innovation plays a pivotal role in enhancing healthcare quality. Health information technology, such as electronic health records (EHRs), has been shown to improve the quality of care by enhancing communication, reducing errors, and facilitating access to patient information (Bates, 2010). Telemedicine and digital health tools have also emerged as critical components in improving access and quality, particularly in remote and underserved areas (Bashshur et al., 2016).
- 3. Training and Development for Healthcare Professionals:** Ongoing training and professional development for healthcare workers are essential in maintaining and improving healthcare quality. Continuous education ensures that healthcare professionals are up to date with the latest medical knowledge and practices. Programs such as the Advanced Trauma Life Support (ATLS) have demonstrated the effectiveness of structured training in improving clinical outcomes (American College of Surgeons, 2018).
- 4. Healthcare Accreditation and Standards:** Healthcare accreditation and adherence to quality standards are vital for ensuring high-quality care. Organizations such as the Joint Commission and the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) set benchmarks for healthcare quality and safety, providing a framework for continuous improvement (Joint Commission, 2020; ISO, 2018).
- 5. Patient Engagement and Empowerment:** Engaging patients in their care is increasingly recognized as a key factor in enhancing healthcare quality. Patient-centered care, which involves respecting patient preferences and involving them in decision-making, has been linked to better health outcomes and patient satisfaction (Epstein & Street, 2011).
- 6. Quality Improvement Initiatives:** Quality improvement initiatives, such as the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle, enable healthcare organizations to systematically improve their services. These initiatives involve identifying areas for improvement, implementing changes, and measuring outcomes to guide further improvements (Langley et al., 2009).

Enhancing healthcare quality requires a comprehensive approach that incorporates patient safety, technological innovation, professional training, adherence to standards, patient engagement, and continuous quality improvement. Through these strategies, healthcare systems can deliver more effective, efficient, and patient-centered care.

Increasing Health Awareness

Increasing health awareness in the population is a vital component of public health strategy, as it empowers individuals to make informed decisions about their health and well-being. This process involves various approaches, including public health campaigns, educational programs, and collaboration among health sectors.

Public health campaigns are a primary tool for raising awareness about health issues. These campaigns use various media channels to disseminate information on a wide range of topics, from chronic disease prevention to the importance of vaccination. The effectiveness of these campaigns in changing public behavior and improving health outcomes has been well-documented. For instance, the anti-smoking campaigns worldwide have significantly contributed to the reduction in smoking rates and associated health problems (National Cancer Institute, 2008).

Education plays a crucial role in health awareness. Educational initiatives in schools, communities, and healthcare settings aim to equip people with the knowledge and skills to make healthy choices. The inclusion of health education in school curricula has been shown to improve health literacy among young people, which can have a long-lasting impact on their health choices and behaviors (Tones & Green, 2004).

Effective health awareness also requires collaboration between healthcare sectors and the media. The media, including traditional and new digital platforms, has a powerful influence on public perception and behavior. Collaborative efforts can ensure the dissemination of accurate and reliable health information, which is particularly important in combating misinformation, as seen during the COVID-19 pandemic (WHO, 2020).

The rise of digital technology and social media has opened new avenues for health awareness. Mobile health applications, online health forums, and social media platforms offer innovative ways to engage the public, provide health education, and support health behavior change (Kreps & Neuhauser, 2010).

Engaging communities and ensuring cultural competence in health awareness efforts are crucial for reaching diverse populations. Tailoring health messages to specific cultural and linguistic contexts enhances their relevance and effectiveness, thereby improving public engagement and outcomes (Resnicow et al., 2009).

In summary, increasing health awareness is a multifaceted endeavor that requires the combined efforts of public health campaigns, educational initiatives, media collaboration, technological innovation, and community engagement. These strategies, when effectively employed, can significantly enhance the public's health knowledge and lead to healthier communities.

Case Studies

Case studies in the realm of healthcare play an instrumental role in illustrating successful strategies, interventions, and policies. These real-world examples provide valuable insights into effective practices, challenges faced, and the impact of various initiatives on healthcare quality and public health awareness.

Successful Models of Healthcare Quality Improvement: One notable case study is the transformation of the healthcare system in Alzira, Spain. This model, known as the Alzira Model, involved a unique public-private partnership aimed at improving healthcare delivery. The model's success was marked by increased efficiency, improved patient satisfaction, and better health outcomes, making it a reference point for healthcare reform globally (Barlow et al., 2013).

Another example is the implementation of the Integrated Care Pathways (ICPs) in the United Kingdom's National Health Service (NHS). These pathways, designed to streamline patient care and enhance coordination across different healthcare services, demonstrated significant improvements in patient outcomes, particularly for chronic conditions like diabetes and heart disease (Allen et al., 2014).

Effective Health Awareness Campaigns: In the realm of public health awareness, the campaign to reduce HIV/AIDS prevalence in Uganda is a noteworthy case study. Through a combination of public education, community engagement, and policy initiatives, Uganda achieved a dramatic decrease in HIV infection rates in the 1990s, a success story in the global fight against HIV/AIDS (Green et al., 2006).

The anti-smoking campaign in Australia, which included measures like plain packaging for cigarettes and graphic health warnings, represents another successful public health initiative. These efforts led to a significant reduction in smoking rates and have been replicated in various other countries (Wakefield et al., 2015).

Challenges and Overcoming Barriers: Case studies also highlight the challenges and barriers encountered in implementing healthcare and public health initiatives. For instance, the rollout of the electronic health record (EHR) system in the United States, while aimed at improving healthcare efficiency and quality, faced challenges like system interoperability issues and user resistance, shedding light on the complexities of technological integration in healthcare (Adler-Milstein et al., 2014).

In conclusion, case studies from different parts of the world provide valuable lessons and insights into the complexities of enhancing healthcare quality and increasing health awareness. They demonstrate the impact of innovative approaches and the importance of addressing challenges to achieve successful outcomes.

Challenges and Barriers: In the journey towards improving healthcare quality and enhancing health awareness, numerous challenges and barriers emerge. These obstacles span across various dimensions including financial constraints, cultural and societal factors, and policy and regulatory hurdles.

Financial Constraints: Financial limitations are a major barrier in both developed and developing countries. The cost of implementing advanced healthcare technologies, training healthcare professionals, and launching public health initiatives can be substantial. A report by the World Health Organization (WHO) on global health expenditure highlights the disparities in healthcare spending, affecting the quality of care and access to services in low-income countries (WHO, 2019).

Cultural and Societal Factors: Cultural and societal factors significantly influence healthcare delivery and public health initiatives. Diverse beliefs and practices regarding health and wellness can affect the acceptance and effectiveness of healthcare interventions. For example, a study by Abubakar et al. (2016) on cultural barriers to healthcare in African communities showed how traditional beliefs could impede the utilization of modern healthcare services.

Policy and Regulatory Hurdles: Policy and regulatory frameworks can either facilitate or hinder improvements in healthcare quality and health awareness. Inconsistent policies, bureaucratic red tape, and lack of enforcement can delay or complicate the implementation of healthcare initiatives. For instance, issues such as data privacy regulations and licensing barriers are significant challenges in telemedicine's widespread adoption, as discussed in a study by Scott Kruse et al. (2018).

Technological Barriers: While technology offers solutions for improving healthcare quality, it also presents its own set of challenges. Issues such as the digital divide, cybersecurity threats, and the need for interoperable systems are significant barriers to technology's effective integration into healthcare systems. The digital divide, in particular, can exacerbate health inequalities, as indicated in a report by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC, 2017).

Workforce Challenges: The healthcare workforce faces its own set of challenges, including staff shortages, burnout, and the need for continuous training. The global shortage of healthcare workers, particularly in rural and underserved areas, is a critical barrier to providing quality care, as highlighted by the World Health Organization in their report on the global health workforce (WHO, 2016).

In summary, the path to enhancing healthcare quality and increasing health awareness is fraught with various challenges and barriers. Addressing these requires a multi-pronged approach involving financial investment, cultural competence, policy reform, technological advancements, and workforce development.

The Future of Healthcare and Health Awareness

The future of healthcare and health awareness is poised to be shaped by various innovative trends and emerging challenges. The advancements in technology shifts in demographic patterns, and the evolving nature of health threats are set to redefine how healthcare is delivered and how the public engages with health information.

Technological innovations, particularly in the field of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning, are expected to revolutionize healthcare delivery. AI applications in diagnostics, treatment planning, and patient care management are predicted to enhance the accuracy and efficiency of healthcare services (Jiang et al., 2017). Additionally, the increasing adoption of digital health tools, including wearable devices and telemedicine, is likely to continue, offering more personalized and accessible healthcare solutions (Topol, 2019).

Another significant trend is the growing emphasis on preventive healthcare and wellness. As healthcare systems grapple with the rising prevalence of chronic diseases, the focus is shifting toward preventive measures, including lifestyle modifications, regular screenings, and vaccinations (Smith et al., 2018).

AI and digital health are not just transforming clinical care but also playing a pivotal role in health awareness and education. The use of AI in analyzing health data can provide valuable insights into public health trends and enable the development of targeted health awareness campaigns. Moreover, digital platforms are increasingly being used for health education, offering interactive and personalized learning experiences (Luxton, 2016). Despite the potential benefits, the integration of new technologies in healthcare presents challenges. Issues related to data privacy, cybersecurity, and the need for robust regulatory frameworks are critical concerns that need to be addressed. Moreover, ensuring equitable access to these technologies remains a significant challenge, especially in low-resource settings (Marabelli & Newell, 2020).

The evolving landscape of healthcare will also have significant implications for the healthcare workforce. There will be an increasing need for professionals who are skilled in digital health technologies and AI. Additionally, the focus on patient-centered care and preventive health will require healthcare providers to develop skills in patient education and behavioral counseling (Snyder et al., 2019). The future of healthcare and health awareness is likely to be characterized by technological innovation, a greater focus on prevention, and the continued evolution of the healthcare workforce. Adapting to these changes while addressing associated challenges will be key to realizing the full potential of these advancements in improving health outcomes and raising health consciousness.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the journey towards enhancing healthcare quality and increasing health awareness is both challenging and dynamic, requiring a multifaceted and collaborative approach. The articles discussed in this series highlight the complexity of these endeavors, emphasizing the need for innovative strategies, continuous improvement, and a deep understanding of the diverse factors that influence healthcare and public health.

The future of healthcare and health awareness is promising, with technological advancements such as AI and digital health tools playing a pivotal role in transforming care delivery and patient engagement. However, it is equally important to address the challenges that come with these advancements, including data privacy, equitable access, and the integration of new technologies into existing healthcare systems.

Furthermore, the importance of health education and public health campaigns cannot be overstated. These initiatives are crucial in empowering individuals with the knowledge and skills to make informed health decisions, ultimately leading to healthier communities.

As healthcare continues to evolve, it should be must that the strategies are focused towards improving quality and awareness. This requires a collaborative effort from healthcare professionals, policymakers, educators, and the public.

By embracing innovation, focusing on preventive care, and ensuring equitable access to healthcare resources, we can work towards a future where quality healthcare and health awareness are accessible to all.

The journey is ongoing, and each step forward brings us closer to a world where every individual has the opportunity to live a healthier, more informed life. The lessons learned from past successes and challenges should guide us in shaping a more resilient and responsive healthcare system, capable of meeting the needs of today's diverse and ever-changing global population.

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