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Task shifting and sharing between doctors and health professionals in primary health care centres: Benefits and challenges encountered in pilot project done in Nigeria

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and middle income countries due to the exodus to first world nations in pursuit for better remuneration and work climate has resulted in a significant burden on the healthcare system in those nations, making it challenging to provide adequate health care to the population. Task shifting and sharing is suggested as possible solutions to address the gap created in rendering care to the majority of the population especially in underserved communities that access the primary health care centers. However, there is limited manpower and knowledge regarding the benefits and challenges of this approach, particularly in primary health care centers.

Possible Findings: This pilot study aimed to explore the benefits and challenges of task shifting and sharing between doctors and health professionals in primary health care centers. A pilot study was conducted in a suburban community in Nigeria, doctors volunteered to render services in primary health centers that were primarily managed by nurses and community health care workers and the results indicated that task shifting and sharing can lead to improved access to health care, increased efficiency, and cost savings. Moreover, it can also enhance the skills of health professionals and provide them with career development opportunities and decrease pressure on the tertiary health care centers due to more utilization of primary levels of care. Task shifting and sharing can also increase patient satisfaction and improve health outcomes. However, the challenges associated with task shifting and sharing include the resistance to change ,need for proper training and education for all health professionals involved, ensuring adequate supervision and maintaining quality care, resource constraints, lack of clear communication and collaboration which could lead to confusion, effort duplication and suboptimal patient care.

Conclusions: The findings of this pilot study suggest that task shifting and sharing between doctors and health professionals in primary health care centers can be a viable solution to address the shortage of doctors in many countries. However, the successful implementation of this approach requires careful planning, involvement of all stakeholders, adequate training, and proper supervision to ensure the provision of quality care. This approach can be particularly effective in low- and middle-income countries where the shortage of doctors is more pronounced. The findings also indicate that patients are generally receptive to receiving care from health professionals other than doctors, provided that they are adequately trained and supervised.

Significance/recommendation: The significance of this study lies in its contribution to the knowledge and understanding of the benefits and challenges of task shifting and sharing in primary health care centers to achieve healthcare for all. This knowledge can inform policy makers and health care providers on the best practices for implementing task shifting and sharing in their respective settings. The findings of this study also have implications for the training and education of health professionals, highlighting the need for a more comprehensive and integrated approach to health workforce development and recommend that policy makers and health care providers prioritize the implementation of task shifting and sharing in primary health care centers. However,

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adequate training, supervision, and quality control measures must be put in place to ensure the provision of quality care.

Conclusion: The implementation of task shifting and sharing should also be accompanied by measures to monitor and evaluate its effectiveness and impact on patient outcomes and health system sustainability. Additionally, further research is needed to explore the long-term effects of task shifting and sharing on patient outcomes and health system sustainability, particularly in low- and middle-income countries where there is significant brain drain and medical professional shortages.

Biography

Dr Sumayya A. Al-Mansur is a young passionate researcher with a background in family medicine. Her research interest focuses on primary health care, health inequalities and digital health. She strongly believes that healthcare should be accessible, available and affordable to everyone as a result she volunteers to improve health outcomes for marginalized communities. Sumayya is a project lead for Concerned Medics Foundation an NGO and she was the project manager for a pilot program on task shifting and sharing between doctors and other health care professionals, it was to explore how health professionals can collaborate and provide high quality of care to patients

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