

QIDS

Quality Improvement Demonstration Study

A DOH-PhilHealth-UCSF-UPecon Partnership

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Physician Satisfaction and the QIDS Bonus Scheme

Promoting high quality care is one of PhilHealth's strategic concerns. Doctors are at the core of high quality care as they transform their knowledge, medicines, and equipment into better health outcomes.

Many factors affect the way physicians make clinical decisions. Education, training, work experience, and membership in professional societies all influence a physician's decision-making process. In addition, doctors who are satisfied with their work and the conditions they work in are more likely to provide higher quality care. Other research has shown, for example, that physician satisfaction is associated with patient retention and continuity of care.

The QIDS project directly measures whether quality can be improved by providing payment incentives for high quality care. As a result, one possibility is that higher performing doctors are more satisfied with PhilHealth. Perhaps an even more intriguing implication is whether their quality improves as their satisfaction increases with their rewards. If that were the case, not only would the satisfaction of doctors paid by PhilHealth be rising, but more importantly, so would the quality of care for PhilHealth patients.

PhilHealth, through the QIDS Bonus Intervention, has recently begun implementing a pilot pay-for-performance scheme in 10 district hospitals within the Visayas. There is a stream of research showing that financial rewards and incentives might positively affect clinical decisions. Thus the "B" Intervention in the QIDS experiment allows the QIDS-PhilHealth investigators to look at how different levels of payment and increasing payments from the

bonuses might be linked to physician satisfaction. Hospitals that are found to meet pre-determined quality standards are entitled to claim, from PhilHealth, professional fees at the specialist rate (an additional 100 pesos per patient per day of confinement) for their general practitioners. All hospital staff share in the bonus payments.

Through this initiative, PhilHealth has also found empirical support that financial incentives – specifically, increases in PhilHealth professional fee reimbursements – influence physician decisions in the Philippines. This further suggests that physician satisfaction with PhilHealth fees could be used as an indicator for monitoring quality.

QIDS examined physician satisfaction with PhilHealth fees in the following way: Every semester, the QIDS team collects data from 90 public physicians who attend to patients in Regions 6, 7, 8, and 10.

Sixty private physicians are also surveyed once during the baseline data collection and a second time during Round 2 data collection. One of the questions we ask physicians is: Are you happy with the fees you receive from PhilHealth? The response to this question is used as a physician satisfaction rating.

Our data indicate that the proportion of public doctors who reported satisfaction with the fees they receive from PhilHealth ranged from 61 to 68 percent over four semesters. QIDS found however, that private doctors reported lower satisfaction ratings over the same time periods.

Interestingly, Figure 1 shows that physician satisfaction is higher when doctors are in the

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QIDS ‘B’ Bonus sites when compared to Access and Control sites. We also see from this Figure that satisfaction in the Bonus sites increases at a proportionately greater rate over time compared to the non-bonus sites. This tells us that elements in the QIDS Bonus scheme promote physician satisfaction – for example, increased professional fees and greater transparency and understanding in the way PhilHealth fees are paid and distributed.

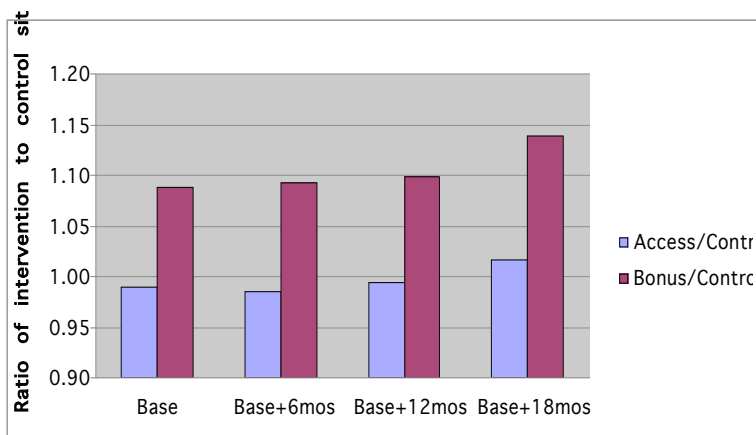
When we compare the initial satisfaction of public doctors with their baseline quality (vignette) scores, we see that there is a wide separation. However, once the program was implemented (i.e. after baseline) we see the satisfaction and quality scores converge and rise together over time. (See Figure 2). The initial drop may be attributed to adjustments doctors made to being explicitly evaluated. Moreover, some doctors initially had the impression that their entire compensation package was going to be subjected to the pay for performance scheme being introduced. The subsequent steady rise is likely attributed to the implementation of the QIDS pilot bonus program, which gives physicians an opportunity to be recognized and then rewarded for their hard work and higher quality care. The implication is that keeping doctors satisfied, through a rational PhilHealth

incentive reimbursement policy, is potentially one way of ensuring that quality of care standards are met sufficiently and consistently.

As described in the QIDS Policy Brief No. 1, to measure quality of care, vignettes are given to physicians in the QIDS study sites to measure quality. Vignettes are paper cases that simulate and measure actual clinical practice. They consist of a typical patient scenario followed by open-ended questions on history taking, performing a physical exam, selecting diagnostic procedures, making a diagnosis, and prescribing treatment plans. Doctors’ responses to these questions are used to calculate a score. Vignettes have been validated as a cost-effective method of measuring quality of care in various settings.

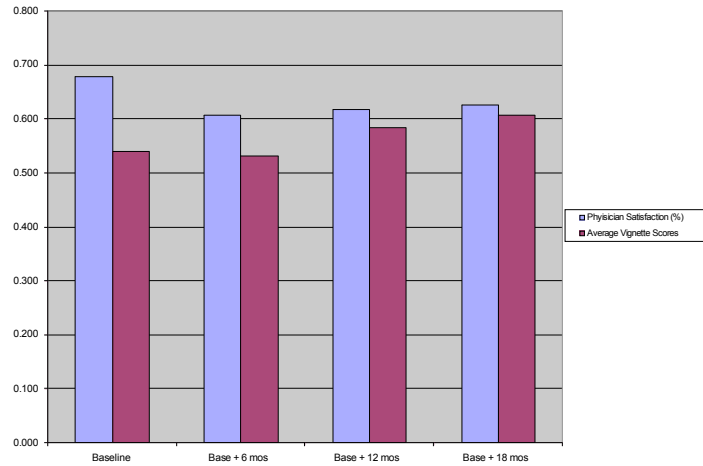
Overall this recent QIDS analysis shows that physician satisfaction can be measured, that it can be linked to changes in quality and that it can be used as a short-term marker of quality improvement. QIDS also raises the possibility that physician satisfaction results not only from the possibility of a rising level of financial compensation, but also from knowing that such financial rewards are linked to providing better care which potentially translates into better outcomes for patients.

Figure 1. Relative Physician Satisfaction (Base = Control Sites)**



** A ratio equal to (greater than) 1 means that physician satisfaction is the same as (greater than) that in control sites

Figure 2. Physician Satisfaction* and Average Vignette Scores, over time



* Defined as % of doctors who reported satisfaction with the PhilHealth fees they received Can you make the legend much bigger

The Quality Improvement Demonstration Study (QIDS), which is jointly being undertaken by the Department of Health (DOH), Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth), University of California San Francisco (UCSF), and the UPecon Foundation, attempts to evaluate policy interventions implemented under the DOH Health Sector Reform Agenda. QIDS is funded by the US National Institutes for Health and PhilHealth.

Specifically, QIDS evaluates the impacts of three policy interventions of interest to PHIC: expanding access to PhilHealth benefits for the most vulnerable populations; targeting bonuses for high quality care that leads to better health outcomes; and the current benefit program. In the QIDS project, these three interventions were randomly assigned to 30 district hospitals in the Visayas. To determine which intervention results in the greatest health benefits, QIDS is carrying out evaluations at baseline, every quarter and at the end-of-project. There are surveys of hospitals, physicians, exiting patients, patient follow home and random households.

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