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Title: A Case study of health needs assessment in Primary Health Care system of East Azerbaijan

Authors: Koosha A1*, Karamouz M2, Farahbakhsh M3, Alizade T4, Abbasi S A5

Abstract: Background: Health needs prioritization has been one of the great challenges for health policy makers. One of the most important factors in successful needs assessment is simple and clear flowchart priorities. Another critical factor is using of appropriate evidences. Community participation is other factor that influences the needs assessment. This study explores the needs assessment in PHC system.

Methods: This case study was explained health needs assessment in primary health care system of East Azerbaijan province of Iran. Health needs are problems that are seen in health status, health determinants and health services of any defined population. Determination of health needs was carried out in the catchment of rural health facility. Needs assessment were begun in health house (HH) and were continued in regional health centers and district health centers and were ended in province health center. In any village, community health council was founded. In first step, Health problems of villages were listed with brainstorming. Then, they were prioritized with the help of nominal group technique and decision matrix. The three first priorities were sent to rural health centers. In health centers, the regional health priorities were determined. Four forms were used in prioritization process.

Results: From 2007, needs assessment is being done in primary health care system of East Azerbaijan annually. The priorities of all rural health houses, rural health centers and districts health centers were determined. Improvement plan was written to all of health priorities at all service delivery points.

Conclusion: clear prioritization process, appropriate evidences, needs assessment team and simple improvement tools are four important factors of a successful health needs assessment. The teams were combined from service providers, community representatives and regional health administrators. Evidences include region health indicators, expert's opinions and community data about health problems.

needs assessment, prioritization, health needs, East Azerbaijan

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