RHRC CONSORTIUM MONITORING AND EVALUATION TOOLKIT

CLIENT RECORD REVIEW PROTOCOL

Purpose

A client record review can be conducted to collect information about client behavior such as antenatal clinic attendance or family planning continuation.

A client record review can also be conducted to compare health worker documentation of care given with standard protocols in order to assure quality of care. This can be to look at such quality of care issues as waiting time for clients in a particular clinic or appropriate lab studies ordered and treatment given.

Description

In a study of client behavior, data from patient registers or patient record cards are copied onto data collection forms designed for the study. Variables may include information such as client's age, parity and use of services.

In a study of documented provider performance, a sample of individual patient records is reviewed periodically by health workers and/or supervisors. The information documented by providers is compared to clinic protocols. Discrepancies between care provided and agreed clinical protocols form the basis of either in-service training to improve practice or protocol revision to better reflect current best practices.

Ethical Considerations

Approvals
Before you begin a study, you must obtain certain permissions for ethical, political and logistical reasons. Some groups you may need to obtain permission from include UNHCR, Ministry of Health, civil authorities in your district, community representatives, your own organization and partner organizations. The consent of the individuals interviewed is always required.

Informed Consent
Client record reviews do not usually involve individual interviews. If the study does include individual interviews, researchers must respect each person's rights. Every respondent has the right to refuse the interview, or to refuse to answer specific questions. The interviewers must respect this right.

Privacy
It is important that clients' records remain private, and are not left out in the office where they may be seen by others.

Confidentiality
The person reviewing clients' records may not discuss those records with anyone, except the supervisor when clarification is needed. Clients' names or other identifying information should not appear on the data collection forms; there should be no way to link a specific form to a specific client.

Data Collection Forms

A simple checklist can be used. The items to be studied are listed and the reviewer checks "yes" or "no" to reflect the information shown on the client record pertinent to that item.

Sampling Plan

The sample of charts for client behavior may be all clients seen during a certain span of time.

For a monthly performance review of ten charts, count the total number of cases–of–interest (for example, STI clinic clients) seen in the previous month. Divide the total by 10. This gives you "n". Select a random number between 0 (zero) and "n". The chart of the client listed at that number in the logbook for the month being reviewed is the first chart selected write down the record number and patient name. In the register book, count "n" more lines, write down the record number and patient name; continue until 10 names are listed. These ten records become the sample for review this month. The same procedure is followed each month to randomly select charts for review from the previous month.

Data Collection Procedures

For a client record review, the reviewer collects client records as selected by the sampling plan and completes a data collection form for each record. If a record selected through the sampling plan is missing from the file, the next record on the master list of cases-of-interest is used.

Data Collector Characteristics

For a client record review, the data collectors are usually project staff. The data collectors need to be knowledgeable about the topic on which information is being gathered.

Data Collector Training

Data collectors should be trained in the use of the form so that they have a clear understanding of the possible answers to expect and the potential problems they might encounter. Allow at least two full days for training with several opportunities for learners to practice using the form.

Time Frame The timeframe will be determined by the intention of the study. A program might schedule client record reviews monthly to look at health worker performance compared to standard treatment protocols or annually to look at family planning continuation.

Analysis Plan

For the client behavior study, data should be compiled in Excel. The variables would be determined by the nature of the behavior being studied. And calculations specific to the study questions should be answered.

For a performance review exercise, staff should meet monthly. Each staff member should review and present one of the charts. At the conclusion of the presentation, all staff members should discuss what was done well and what should have been done differently.

Use of data Data from this type of study should be used to decide what actions to take in order to improve program quality and effectiveness.

Dissemination

Summary and detailed reports should be written. The reports should be shared with clinic staff. Together, clinic staff and program managers should decide ways to improve services based on findings from client record reviews.

Additional Resources