Making supervision Supportive and Sustainable in Primary Health Care Services in Nigeria

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Introduction

The benefit of supervision in managing human resources in Primary Health Care is often not achieved in developing countries including Nigeria. Supervision services have traditionally emphasized on administrative issues such as inspection of facilities , use of resources , supply of logistics , review of records and communication of information from higher to lower levels without regard to facilitation. Supervisors usually blame individuals rather than look for root causes in deficient processes. For this reason, traditional supervision systems have not sufficiently ‘empowered staff to engage in problem solving or to take initiative in improving service quality and access to clients.

The paper aims to identify gaps and limitations militating against supervision in primary health care.

Materials and method:

The study observed and documented gaps in supervision styles in primary health care centres in Abia State . Data were generated by review of relevant literature and work experiences. A two-day on the job training was provided for the supervisees. Training emphasized self-assessment, peer assessment, community input to change supervision from inspecting facilities and gathering service statistics to concentrating on the performance of clinical tasks and resolution of problems. Analysis of findings was qualitatively.

Result

The followings were identified as the systemic problems that plagued effective supervision in primary health care centres . These include:

• lack of planning and /or training of staff

• failure to define priorities in services provided

• shortage of resources (man, materials and finance)

• episodic visits of supervisors

• staff non-adherence to work ethics

• diversion of resources

• lack of financial stability

• lack of accountability and

• low morale among health workers due to punitive measures

The study found that facilitating on the job learning promoted quality health care services, high standard teamwork and increased the health workers’ problem –solving techniques.

Conclusion:

On the job training both formal and informal whether in one-on-one meeting, in peer discussion, and in meetings outside the work place will enhance supportive supervision and enable health workers to review their performances against standards.