

Road to Results

ACHIEVING SUCCESS STEP BY STEP

Medical Accreditation Commission in Kyrgyzstan: Inspiring Improvement in Quality of Care

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With support from the USAID-funded ZdravPlus Project, the Medical Accreditation Commission (MAC) is working to improve quality of care in Kyrgyzstan by motivating health care workers and managers to improve their facilities and the quality of service provided to the population, not through penalizing violators of rules—as was common under the Soviet system— but rather through rewarding those institutions that meet certain standards of care. In addition to quality improvement at the facility level, accreditation contributes to the broader health system reforms as it is connected to eligibility for payment under the state health insurance plan.

Established in 1997, MAC is not funded from the state budget and thus brings to the health sector an independent, objective perspective. Health care facilities are encouraged to improve their internal operations so that they can take advantage of the health care reforms that are happening at the national level, and thus provide improved access to quality health care for the population. To date, MAC has accredited 85 of the 387 state health facilities in Kyrgyzstan.

MAC's accreditation criteria, developed with technical assistance from ZdravPlus and the World Bank, address five major aspects of a healthcare facility, including:

- patient focus;
- management of the facility;
- systems for guaranteeing safety and quality of care;
- ongoing staff training, and;
- information management, including internal and external communication systems.

The accreditation process works as follows: MAC staff visit the facility and meet with the full staff to explain the process and the evaluation criteria. Then, the facility is left to fill in the self-evaluation. Facilities have access to the criteria at any time, and can spend as much time as they

need improving their facility in preparation for the accreditation review. When they are ready, they call MAC to invite the experts for a site visit and independent evaluation. MAC assessors spend somewhere from 4-7 days at the facility.

As the director of MAC, Sabyrbek Orozaliev, explained, at first, the medical facilities did not understand the process and they “gave themselves the highest marks, but then we decided to deduct points if their self-assessment scores turned out to be more than 15% higher than the scores our evaluators gave them. This has made people take the self-assessment seriously.”



Director Orozaliev and other MAC staff contribute to health systems reforms in Kyrgyzstan through the accreditation of health care facilities

Key to the success of the MAC accreditation process is the selection of realistic and important indicators for the evaluation and accreditation process, based both on international standards and practices, but designed with the realities of Kyrgyzstan in mind. This takes into account tight health care budgets and the resources and medical training available in Kyrgyzstan. As one of the MAC staff explained, the standards reflect MAC's philosophy of encouraging quality improvement rather than penalizing medical facilities for their behavior: “our standards are realistic ones for our conditions today in Kyrgyzstan.”



The USAID-funded ZdravPlus Program provides technical assistance and training to improve the health of Central Asian populations by improving health delivery systems

MAC credits itself with many of the improvements in health care on the facility level in Kyrgyzstan. At the Kiminskii Rayon Territorial Hospital, in Chui Oblast about 2,5-hours from Bishkek, the hospital administration restructured and decreased the number of beds from 380 to 130, concentrating their resources, and improving the quality of care provided. MAC attributes these improvements largely to the accreditation process, noting that the facility is now committed to continuous improvement, as shown by the attention being paid to ongoing staff training.

“Our approach is that we contribute to quality improvement by inspiring health care workers and managers to improve the quality of care,” explained Orozaliev.

Currently, hospitals, polyclinics, and family group practices pay for the accreditation process out of their own funds from the paid services which they provide to patients. MAC is working with the MOH to ensure that in the future, facilities

can use their budgetary funds to cover accreditation costs.

Health care facilities are eager for accreditation and willing to foot the bill for several reasons: first, they see the benefit of the accreditation process in improving the facility itself, having heard about these benefits from already-accredited facilities; second, accreditation positions facilities to be consistent with the legal framework requiring accreditation for payment under the health insurance program; third, the accreditation guidelines give facilities clear and concrete guidelines to follow, based on international standards, in operating in a new and unfamiliar reform environment; and lastly, accreditation brings with it a level of prestige, in the eyes of the public, the staff, and the government.

MAC hopes to eventually accredit all health care facilities in Kyrgyzstan, including private facilities and health sanatoria.

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