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## “IMPACT OF ACCREDITATION ON QUALITY OF INDIAN PRIVATE HOSPITALS”

**SHUBHANGI CHANDRAKAR**

Research Scholar

&

**DR. ANUSHA PRIYA**

Assistant Professor (Management) & Research Supervisor,

Jharkhand Rai University, Jharkhand-834005

### ABSTRACT

Accreditation ensures the standard of healthcare, yet accreditation effects on service quality are much debated. Some perceive it as improving quality and organizational performance, whereas others see it as overly bureaucratic and time-consuming, so adding it has limited advantage. The aim of the present study was to understand the perception of hospital staff working in quality management (i.e., doctors, nurses, management and administrators) on accreditation, and determine whether years of accreditation have had any impact on their perception. This was a cross-sectional, descriptive, data-based study initiated by the Consortium of Accredited Healthcare Organizations. It consisted of primary data obtained in form of responses to a 30-item questionnaire and collected from 100 respondents. A probability (p) value of less than 0.05 was considered statistically significant. Results: For all 30 items, a significantly greater number of participants had a favorable response (p, 0.001). A greater number of administrators, as compared with doctors and nurses, responded positively on the impact of accreditation (p, 0.05). Participants from hospitals with 1–4 years of accreditation, as compared with participants from hospitals with 4–12 years of accreditation, gave a favorable response (p, 0.05). One of the most important hurdles to implementing accreditation programs is the dilemma of healthcare professionals, especially senior hospital staff, regarding the positive impact of accreditation. The need to educate healthcare professionals about the potential benefits of accreditation, which should resolve any cynical attitude of healthcare professionals towards accreditation, is of utmost importance. Accreditation is viewed as a reputable tool to evaluate and enhance the quality of health care. Following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses guidelines, two reviewers independently screened initially identified articles, reviewed the full-text of potentially relevant studies, extracted necessary data, and assessed the methodological quality of the included studies using a validated tool. The accreditation effects were synthesized and categorized thematically into six impact themes. Accreditation on healthcare workers and particularly on job stress, our results indicate a consistent positive effect of hospital accreditation on safety culture, process-related performance measures, efficiency, and the patient length of stay, whereas employee satisfaction, patient satisfaction and experience, and 30-day hospital readmission rate were found to be unrelated to accreditation. Paradoxical results regarding the impact of accreditation on mortality rate and healthcare-associated infections hampered drawing firm conclusions on these outcome measures.

**Keywords:** hospital accreditation, healthcare services, patient safety, benefits of accreditation, quality of care, quality indicators

## INTRODUCTION:

Healthcare quality (HQ) is a broad concept that can be defined as ‘the degree to which health services for individuals and populations increase the likelihood of desired health outcomes and are consistent with current professional knowledge and comprises multiple dimensions, including: safety, patient-centeredness, timeliness, equity, access, efficiency and effectiveness. However, accurately assessing HQ is difficult, as there is a lack of formal systems to monitor and ensure consistency in healthcare delivery<sup>[1]</sup>. Therefore, hospital accreditation has been frequently adopted worldwide to assess and improve healthcare service quality. Mainly due to the methodological shortcomings, the positive impact of accreditation on healthcare dimensions should be interpreted with caution. This study provides an up-to-date overview of the main themes examined in the literature, highlighting critical knowledge-gaps and methodological flaws. The findings may provide value to healthcare stakeholders in terms of improving their ability to assess the relevance of accreditation processes. Hospital accreditation programs, defined as the ‘systematic assessment of hospitals against accepted standards, are conducted by independent bodies, external to the hospital structure, usually comprising nongovernmental and nonprofit organizations<sup>[2]</sup>. The process includes staff training, the establishment of a team project, selection of standards to be followed and implementation of specified requirements. It also comprises survey visits by a multidisciplinary healthcare team, leading to a detailed report of identified areas of improvement and the next cycle of follow-up visits. Two important benefits of the accreditation process are the standardization of procedures and internal policies and the establishment of management systems. In addition, the adoption of pre-established and explicit standards to guide processes of care may also contribute to patient safety, especially when factoring in well-established metrics such as medication errors. However, both systematic and nonsystematic literature reviews conducted previously indicate that there is no consensus regarding the impact of accreditation on hospital outcomes<sup>[3]</sup>.

Healthcare quality dimensions

### QUALITY DIMENSION

### DESCRIPTION

Effectiveness	The healthcare service is delivered based on scientific knowledge and results in improved health outcomes. Health services are provided to all who could benefit, refraining from providing services to those not likely to benefit.
Efficiency	The healthcare service is delivered in a manner, which maximizes resource use and avoids waste, including waste of equipment, supplies, ideas and energy. It aims the greatest health improvement at the lowest cost, with the most advantageous cost-benefit.
Access	The healthcare is timely, geographically reasonable and provided in a setting where skills and resources are appropriate to medical need.
Patient-centeredness	The healthcare is respectful of and responsive to individual patient preferences, needs, culture and values. There is a conformity to patient preferences regarding patient-practitioner relation, the service accessibility and amenities, the effects and costs of care.
Equity	The healthcare does not vary in quality because of personal

**QUALITY  
DIMENSION****DESCRIPTION**

characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, geographic location and socioeconomic status. It accounts for fairness in the distribution of care and its effects on health,

**Timeliness**

The healthcare is delivered in a timely manner, reducing waiting times and harmful delays for both those who receive and those who give care.

**Safety**

The healthcare is delivered in a manner, which minimizes risks and harm to service users, avoiding injuries to patients from the care that is intended to help them<sup>[4]</sup>.

**OBJECTIVE:**

To review systematically the impact of hospital accreditation on healthcare quality indicators, as classified into seven healthcare quality dimensions.

**STUDY SELECTION**

We applied the PICO framework to select the articles according to the following criteria: Population—all types of hospitals; Intervention—hospital accreditation; Comparison—quantitative method applied to compare accredited vs. non accredited hospitals, or hospitals before vs. after accreditation; Outcomes—regarding the seven healthcare quality dimensions<sup>[5]</sup>.

**MEHODOLOGY:**

By searching eight databases in June 2020: EBSCO, Pub-Med, Web of Science, Emerald, Pro-Quest, Science Direct, Scopus and Virtual Health Library. Search terms were conceptualized into three groups: hospitals, accreditation and terms relating to healthcare quality. The eligibility criteria included academic articles that applied quantitative methods to examine the impact of hospital accreditation on healthcare quality indicators<sup>[6]</sup>. The eligibility criteria for our study limited the nature of texts to academic articles, with full online texts available, written in either English or Portuguese. Selected articles empirically assess the impact of hospital accreditation on HQI, through quantitative methods<sup>[7]</sup>.

The inclusion criteria are based on the PICO framework: 'Population'—all types of hospitals; 'Intervention'—hospital accreditation; 'Comparison'—pre-post-A or AxNA hospitals; 'Outcomes'—regarding the seven HQD. 100 valid participants, the highest number of responses was obtained from administrators (60%); the profession wise distribution of participants. In the present study, respondents were evaluated for their perception regarding the impact of hospital accreditation and patient safety<sup>[8]</sup> For all 30 items, participants with a favorable response (i.e., yes) were significantly greater ( $p < 0.001$ ). Moreover, of 100 participants responded that overall

improvement in quality of healthcare services was a result of accreditation. Hence, the results showed a statistically significant association between the perception of staff<sup>[9]</sup>

## RESULTS OF DATA SYNTHESIS;

Overall results suggest that accreditation may have a positive impact on efficiency, safety, effectiveness, timeliness and patient-centeredness. In turn, only one study analyzes the impact on each results were imported and duplicates<sup>[10]</sup>.

## DISCUSSION:

The healthcare industry is one of the most important industries in the service field. Owing to the complex nature and number of stakeholders in healthcare system, healthcare quality is a complex concept. The healthcare industry has undergone transformation from a physician-centered approach to a patient centered approach, leading to high demand for quality in healthcare services. That change has caused quality assurance mechanisms to intensify and accreditation to be pursued<sup>[11]</sup>. Accreditation serves as an essential component to achieve technical competence within healthcare organizations in terms of delivering certain standards of healthcare services. In India, factors influencing the growth of hospital accreditation are primarily due to pressure from other organizations on which accreditation is dependent and cultural expectations within the area where the organization functions. Hence, in the present study various parameters denoting the impact and awareness of hospital accreditation amongst doctors, nurses, and administrators— quality team members—were studied<sup>[12]</sup>. By promoting organizational learning and quality improvement initiatives evaluating seven components, namely leadership, information and analysis, strategic quality planning, human resources utilization, quality management, quality results, and customer satisfaction. They found very high scores ranging between 3 to 4, signifying positive patient satisfaction<sup>[13]</sup>.

## CONCLUSION :

The present study concludes that accreditation is vital to ensure disciplined hospital management and to impart quality care and patient safety. It included various parameters related to patient satisfaction, staff awareness and responsibilities, coordinated work, infection control practices and cleanliness, documentation, infrastructure care and management (eg, laboratory, equipment).

The results indicate that accreditation has had an impact on hospitals in improvements. One of the most important hurdles to implementing various accreditation programs is the dilemma of healthcare professionals, especially senior hospital staff, regardThis study aimed to systematically review the impact of hospital accreditation on HQIs, as classified into seven HQDs. Our results indicate that accreditation may have a positive impact on efficiency, safety, effectiveness, patient-centeredness and timeliness dimensions. Also, it seems that accreditation has no impact on access indicators<sup>[14]</sup>. However, these results should be analyzed carefully due to the methodological pitfalls pointed out previously. This study's limitations include the risk of overlooking some key literature, given the fact that studies not published in peer-reviewed journals or indexed in electronic databases were excluded; this also includes potentially important literature that may have been undiscovered due to the use of different keywords. In addition, this systematic review focused on studies empirically and quantitatively examining the impact of accreditation on quality dimensions, comparing AxNA hospitals or hospitals before vs. after accreditation. Thus, any relevant study outside these limits was not

considered eligible. Secondly, the selected studies comprised distinct research contexts and methods, thus hindering a statistical meta-analysis. Thirdly, the heterogeneity and methodological shortcomings of studies constrain of these review findings. Despite these limitations, our study provides an up-to-date overview of the main themes and subthemes examined in the literature, highlighting critical knowledge gaps and methodological flaws. The findings also benefit healthcare stakeholders by improving their capability to assess the relevance of the accreditation processes. Also, the use of a more detailed synthesis and new categories of analysis helped to extend the findings of previous reviews. Future investigations may benefit from expert panels to assess the quality of studies, thereby gathering different viewpoints. Also, considering the time, effort and resources needed for accreditation programs, future studies can estimate the costs involved and the financial benefits associated with or resulting from hospital accreditation. Finally, given that the equity dimension was not analyzed and that few studies have assessed access, timeliness and patient-centeredness, future research could investigate the impact of accreditation on these dimensions<sup>[15]</sup>.

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