

Abstract

Introduction: Health information management systems provide health intelligence, and guides the health services. Therefore accuracy and timeliness of health data play a crucial role.

Objective: To verify monthly reports of hospital dental clinics and to describe factors affecting provision of accurate data in monthly reports from hospital dental clinics in Colombo district.

Methods: A descriptive cross sectional study was conducted among dental surgeons from OPD dental clinics in the Colombo district. It was decided to recruit all dental surgeons for the study. There were 85 dental surgeons assigned for these 19 clinics: of which 75 participated in the study. Two check lists to evaluate timeliness and completeness of monthly returns, routine data quality assessment soft-ware and a self-administered questionnaire were used as data collection tools.

Results:

Out of the 85 appointed dental surgeons (in 19 dental clinics) seventy five were available. However only ninety three (36.5%) monthly returns (MR) instead of the expected approx. 255 were prepared and only sixty nine monthly returns (27%) were received by the medical statistics unit (MSU). All the monthly returns were received late: from one week to more than four month after due date. Considering completeness 72% of prepared and 75% of received MR (MSU) were complete. Accuracy rate calculated for ten institutions ranged from 8.79 to 91.59 respectively. The OPD tickets were maintained by 78% of service delivery sites while the clinic register was maintained by all service delivery sites (although approximately half (52.63%) of them were complete).

Forty four percent and 29% dental surgeon acquired knowledge from professional colleagues and by own experiences respectively. Fifty six per cent (56%) of dental surgeons had correct knowledge regarding preparation of the monthly returns. When the time of submission of the monthly returns was considered 60% of dental surgeons had adequate knowledge. One quarter of dental surgeon said that the health information system was not an essential sub system of the health services.

The system assessment findings revealed that the dental health management system had adequate indicator definitions but was weak in all other aspects. The data management process was the weakest aspect of the oral health recording and reporting system.

Conclusion:Therefore changes to the existing system through improvement of structure, human resource development activities and allocation of financial incentives could be recommended. Additionally conversion from a paper base system to a computer based system is recommended.