

Abstract

In Sri Lanka, the Public Health Midwife is the most peripheral Primary Health Care worker of the state sector health services. Being the grass root level health worker, she has a key role to play in the delivery of primary health care services to the community. Traditionally, her role was focused on the provision of maternal and child health services.

An attempt was made to study the curricula for training of PHMM, identify the designated duties and the activities currently performed by the PHM and to make an assessment of the work performance of the PHM. Several approaches were used in the assessment of the work performance i.e. self assessment of competencies, assessment of knowledge and attitudes, by observation of clinic activities and a community based study.

In general, a majority of PHMM assessed themselves to be competent in many of the activities except in those related to natal care and selected areas related to child health. However, the level of knowledge related to a majority of their designated duties was not satisfactory. Very poor correlation was seen between self assessed competencies and knowledge indicating the limitations of using self assessment as a method of assessing performance.

Clinic observations identified that even routine activities of the PHMM required improvement eg. weighing of children,

immunization of infants and preschool children. The community based study indicated that domiciliary care was poor particularly in the areas of postnatal care and child care. PHM was found to be a satisfactory promoter of family planning.

An indication of their dissatisfaction with the job they had to perform was conveyed in some of their attitudes. These have to be viewed taking into consideration, the career structure, incentives etc. .

An attempt was made to review the curriculum with a view to identifying areas that need improvement using selected activities with poor performance, as tracer conditions. Pathway analysis of curriculum indicated that teaching methods and evaluation methods needs to be reviewed, even though a detailed analysis of the evaluation of the training programmes could not be done due to non availability of information.

In view of the important role that the PHM could play in the PHC services in Sri Lanka in a changing socio demographic environment, it is relevant to make appropriate modifications in their training (both basic and in-service) to better equip them for their future role.

Implementing some of the policy measures recommended in the Health Policy document specially those related to performance appraisal and accountability will be a useful approach to improve the contribution that could be made by these health workers .