SPOT - Project abstract

Background

Because of an aging population, shortened length of stay and increasing amount of patient discharges from hospitals as well as rising chronic conditions, there will be a shift from acute to community and home care setting, which leads to an increased workload in primary care with an additional necessity of over 19'000 home care workers until 2030 in Switzerland. Problematic is not only the requirement of additional workforce but also the forthcoming retirement of the "baby boomer" generation, low percentage of trained nurses actually working in the profession as well as the high turnover. In view of the increasing personnel shortage in the Swiss home care setting, it is important to assess the importance of modifiable work environment factors to improve employee and client outcomes. Since no such overview has been done before in the Swiss setting, a pilot study will help to test the data collection and broader measurement issues with personnel and client data, in order to cover well the setting-specific aspects of home care and to test the usability of the national home care quality indicators.

Study aim

The following study aims will be pursued: (1) To test the measurement und procedures regarding their applicability for a nationwide survey in a pilot sample of home care agencies in the German part of Switzerland. (2) To describe the prevalence of job-related resources and stressors, work engagement and burnout in the participating home care agencies as well as to explore the relationship of the home care work environment, job-related resources and stressors with work engagement and burnout. (3) to provide a descriptive benchmarking report to the participating home care agencies.

Methods

This will be a multicenter, cross-sectional pilot survey study, conducted in a convenience sample of six home care agencies of different sizes with an expected final sample size of around 1100 participants in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. Measured variables will be characteristics of the agencies, work environment, employees' characteristics and outcomes and clients' characteristics and outcomes. For aim 1, questionnaires will be tested for relevance and understandability with experts and home care workers before the survey. Descriptive statistics will be conducted to assess missing data, distributions, floor and ceiling effects. If data fulfills the requirements, two multivariate regression models will be built for aim 2 to assess the relationship of home care work environment, job-related resources and stressors with work engagement and burnout.

Ethical considerations

This study will be submitted for ethical approval to the ethical committees of the cantons where the home care agencies are positioned with the Ethikkommission Nordwestschweiz as leading ethics committee. Each home care agency is asked to give informed consent to participate in the study.

Expected results

We expect to get an overview of characteristics of the work environment, job-related stressors, employee and client outcomes as well as organizational characteristics in the home care setting in Switzerland. We also expect a first idea of quality differences between the participating home care agencies and we will report factors related to burnout and work engagement. This will allow policy makers and home health care management to include the insights in their planning and work organization. Moreover, we will receive feedback from the participating home care agencies regarding the survey, data collection methods and benchmarking report for a later nationwide home care survey.