Impact of HIV Project Echo (Extensions for Community Health Outcomes) in Kazakhstan

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ISBN
9780438064539

Abstract
In 2016, Kazakh Medical University for Continuous Education (KazMUCE) in collaboration with Columbia University and the US CDC, conducted a pilot program to replicate Project ECHO, a weekly innovative, virtual mentoring and training CME platform for healthcare workers. A 10-month HIV case-based curriculum was developed and implemented by KazMUCE, which served as a Training Center for the for 24 HIV treatment facilities located throughout the country. An evaluation was developed aimed at exploring the value of Project ECHO as a CME model in Kazakhstan using the desired outcomes from each level in Moore’s Expanded CME Evaluation Framework. The study objective was to evaluate the relationship between Project ECHO and capacity-building among clinicians for providing high-quality care for people living with HIV in Kazakhstan. Methods included conducting and analyzing pre- and post-knowledge assessments, self-efficacy, and satisfaction surveys among all participants, as well as conducting nine in-depth interviews and five focus group discussions among participants.

There was over 90% participation in all sessions from 97 participants across all 24 HIV treatment sites in Kazakhstan. The pre- and post-knowledge assessment showed that 75% (n=73) of participants increased their score from the baseline. The surveys showed an increase of 28% in self-efficacy and an increase of 19% in job satisfaction. In the focus groups and interviews participants shared that they appreciated being involved in a community of practice and having evidence-based concepts reinforced through the real-time practical case presentations and short didactic sessions. Providers also mentioned that the case-based learning provided a unique opportunity for providers to gain information to apply in their service delivery. Reports from respondents suggest that providers improved their performance, specifically the quality of prescribing effective treatment, managing side effects of the treatment as well as complications associated with HIV infection. As a result, providers shared that their patients’ outcomes have improved.

The high degree of site participation, individual attendance, and support for the program among healthcare workers suggests that Project ECHO is a feasible model of CME in Kazakhstan, which could be expanded to other specialties and medical cadres.

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