

Needs Assessment Overview

What:

Needs assessment is the systematic process of determining the size and nature of a gap between current and more desirable knowledge, skills, attitudes, performances, and situations.

Purpose:

Results from needs assessments help in the development of effective CME and broader health system interventions.

Examples of needs assessment strategies:

- Chart audit, chart stimulated recall
- Standardized assessment exercises
- Knowledge questions
- Interview
- Focus group
- Questionnaire
- Observation: direct observation, video observation, standardized patients
- Morbidity and mortality patterns, epidemiological data
- Federal, state/provincial, and organizational databases and atlases
- Reflection in/on practice: computerized tools, office visit diary, learning portfolios, improved question-asking skills

Classifications of Needs Assessment:

There are different conceptualizations of needs. For example:

Felt needs: what people say

Individual vs organizational or group needs

Expressed needs: expressed in action

Clinical versus administrative needs

Normative needs: defined by experts

Subjective vs objectively measured needs

Comparative needs: group comparison

Inferred needs: derived from developments in diagnosis, treatment, technology, regulations, organizations, etc.

Verbalized needs and interests: informal comments, formal surveys, etc.

Proven needs: ie. epidemiological data, quality assurance/audit data, etc.

System or population needs: can be identified by population-based data and information about care-seeking behaviour and referral patterns

Points to consider:

- Needs assessment strategies will depend on purpose of needs assessment, the kind of data desired, and resources.
- A combination of strategies will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the situation.
- Identified needs likely represent only a portion of existing needs.

Resources:

- Needs Assessment Bibliography <http://www.cme.utoronto.ca/research/bibliographies.asp>
- Power point presentation: "Needs assessment: background, tools, and applications", Davis D. www.ktp.utoronto.ca/whatisktp/tools/needsAssessment
- Examples of needs assessment questionnaires and chart reviews www.ktp.utoronto.ca/whatisktp/tools/needsAssessment

References

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