

Do We Value Task Shifting Between Health Workers Appropriately?

Background



The global shortage of health workers represents a major obstacle in delivering universal health coverage. Task shifting offers a potential solution. It involves the reallocation of healthcare tasks among the health workforce, typically reallocating work to those with lower levels of training and who are lower paid. Yet, as well as the costs, we also need to include the benefits of task shifting and the other benefits that may be given up by choosing to spend money on this activity. This allows the estimation of value for money which is important for deciding which healthcare to prioritise. Our research considered how to evaluate task shifting and whether task shifting has been valued appropriately in the past.

Our Study

Task shifting changes healthcare roles. For example, it might impact on job satisfaction and healthcare quality. We therefore developed a logic model based on the literature to make explicit the array of potential short, intermediate, and long-term costs and benefits resulting from the decision to task shift. We then identified studies published between 2014 and 2024 in which the value for money of task shifting had been estimated. We compared the studies to the logic model to assess which costs and benefits had been included in the estimate of value for money and how they had been included.

Findings

We identified 26 studies which evaluated task shifting to community health workers, lay health workers, radiographers, non-physician clinicians and nurse-midwives. Although staffing costs and health benefits were captured in all of the 26 studies, most studies did not include broader costs and benefits such as:

- **Workforce capacity and productivity**
- **Burden on other staff**
- **Patient access and waiting times**
- **Patient and staff satisfaction**
- **Staff retention**
- **Explicit training costs for the new cadre**
- **Health equity**
- **Complication and readmittance rates**

These wider benefits are important factors if we want to know the full value of task shifting.

Recommendations

- ✓ It is important to consider the wider implications of task shifting's value proposition to avoid inefficient or inequitable resource allocation.
- ✓ The logic model can aid future task shifting evaluations to ensure:



transparency for
decision-makers



clearly defined
scope



comprehensive
assessment of value

Underlying Research

Research Article: Murphy, P., Griffin, S., Fulbright, H. et al. Are Economic Evaluations of Task Shifting Too Narrow in Focus? A Rapid Review. *PharmacoEconomics* (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40273-025-01507-x>

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