

La prestación de atención de salud está cambiando

Muchos países están integrando los servicios de planificación familiar con otros servicios de salud, especialmente otros servicios de salud reproductiva y salud materno-infantil (7, 65, 73, 89, 97, 134). La prestación de servicios bien integrados puede ayudar a reducir la duplicación, el derroche y la falta de coordinación entre los programas.

Cuando la atención de salud está integrada, es frecuente que las cadenas de suministros también lo estén. Las cadenas de suministros integradas pueden contribuir a que la prestación de servicios sea más eficiente mediante la compra conjunta de productos y otras actividades con participación en los costos, como el almacenamiento y transporte integrados.

La integración, empero, suele complicar otros aspectos de la logística. Los sistemas logísticos de los programas integrados deben manejar una serie grande de productos y no solo anticonceptivos (7, 64, 102). Las proyecciones y las compras se tornan más complejas y es esencial contar con sistemas de información más amplios. Las cadenas de suministros integradas podrían ser menos fidedignas que las cadenas de suministros que se concentran solo en los anticonceptivos (7, 49).

Poco es lo que se ha investigado sobre el impacto de las cadenas de suministros integradas. En comparación con los programas de planificación familiar, las cadenas de suministros integradas tienen la ventaja de atraer el compromiso y asistencia del gobierno. Las autoridades por lo común se preocupan más por los productos farmacéuticos que por los anticonceptivos, y en algunos lugares la planificación familiar origina aún más controversias que otros tipos de atención de la salud. Por otra parte, los administradores de los programas de planificación familiar pueden temer que los anticonceptivos se ignoren o se olviden en una cadena de suministros integrada, en favor de otros productos sanitarios.

Descentralización. Una tendencia acompañante es la descentralización, es decir, transferir la responsabilidad de dirigir los servicios de atención de la salud del nivel central a los niveles intermedios y comunitarios. La descentralización está dirigida a mejorar el acceso a los servicios de atención de

salud y a consolidar la calidad y la eficiencia, confiriendo más responsabilidad y autoridad a los directores locales próximos a los lugares de distribución.

Los directores locales, por estar más cerca de los clientes, deberán ser capaces de tomar mejores decisiones sobre la asignación de recursos que los funcionarios del nivel central. Además, la descentralización puede despertar más interés y participación local en los programas de planificación familiar (66). Para una descentralización efectiva de los sistemas logísticos, el personal de los niveles locales debe estar bien adiestrado y todas las partes del sistema tienen una mayor necesidad de intercambiar información (64). Se requiere re-adiestramiento en toda la cadena de suministros (86).

No obstante, la descentralización quizá no mejore todos los aspectos de la prestación de servicios. El sistema logístico, en particular, es más eficiente si se centralizan los sistemas de información, la selección de productos, las proyecciones y las compras. En un sistema centralizado, la cadena de suministros puede controlarse mejor y mantenerse centrada en su propósito esencial de asegurar que los suministros estén disponibles para satisfacer la demanda de los clientes (1, 99). A medida que se descentraliza el proceso de adopción de decisiones del programa, por lo común se reduce el personal de la gestión logística central, y el funcionamiento de la cadena de suministros puede sufrir como resultado de esto (7).

La prestación de servicios de atención de salud está cambiando. La financiación de anticonceptivos por parte de los donantes es menos segura. Cada vez hay más gente que necesita y quiere practicar la anticoncepción y protegerse contra el VIH/SIDA y otras ITS. Pocos países en desarrollo podrán pagar los costos por sí mismos en el futuro próximo. Si los programas fortalecen las cadenas de suministros de planificación familiar, pueden aprovechar mejor los suministros existentes y atender a más clientes. Finalmente, es de importancia crucial contar tanto con una cadena de suministros eficaz como con fuentes seguras de asistencia financiera para el suministro de anticonceptivos y satisfacer así las necesidades de los clientes y garantizar la salud reproductiva de todos. (*La versión en español de este número se publicó en febrero de 2003.*)

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