



Effective Strategies of Health Promotion, Preventive Health Care and Disease Management

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Background

The effective use of preventive healthcare and health promotion has a positive impact on the whole society because it reduces health care cost and improves health of the population. Appropriate strategies of health promotion and motivation for healthy lifestyle together with permanent support for preventive care have a large impact on health and quality of life. Health insurance companies have possibilities to do a lot in this area.

As a head of the department dealing with health program development for a health insurance company, I am responsible for leadership and administration of several health programs and preparation of educational materials for our clients. Most of my responsibilities concern preventive health care and health promotion. This is why any opportunity to gain new experience and knowledge in this area is important to me.

Revírní Bratrská Pokladna, my employer, suggested that I take part in the Young Leaders Program of the American Fund. The most difficult part of my project preparation was to establish contacts with suitable American partners. I had no professional contacts in the United States and it took me a long time to find promising partners with my professional specialization. Another challenge was to synchronize my program and my regular duties. Arranging travel documents was easy, still getting US visa required some patience.

The way the Young Leaders Program is structured to fit the specific professional interests of each applicant is immensely beneficial. The preparation of my individual program took a long time but it has been very beneficial to me.

American Partners

Harvard University, School of Public Health (HSPH), Boston, Massachusetts. HSPH is highly credited, provides summer courses in the field of my interest and academic support at a very high level. The Harvard School of Public Health was founded in 1922. It is a member of Association of Schools of Public Health. It was the second-best school of public health in the United States according to the U.S. News (2007).

HSPH offers a wide range of courses in graduate and postgraduate and executive summer programs. The summer session participants are mainly public health professionals, primary care practitioners, physicians and managers engaged in evaluation of healthcare delivery. Courses are led by leading experts in the field.

From the wide range of courses I chose “**Measuring and Analyzing the Outcomes of Health Care**” and “**Research in Social and Behavioral Health**”. My objective was to enlarge my knowledge in evaluation of health programs and to gain new ideas for my future projects.

Kaiser Permanente (KP), Oakland, Santa Rosa, San Francisco, San Rafael, California. KP is a health maintenance organization (HMO) offering health insurance. It is one of the largest HMOs in the United States, headquartered in Oakland, California. It operates in seven other states. The U.S. News (2009) rates KP's private and Medicare health insurance plans the best in the United States. U.S. News gives it also the highest rating for treatment and prevention.

KP is not only a health insurer cooperating with healthcare providers. From the beginning of its existence, KP has been supporting preventive medicine and attempts to educate its clients about maintaining their health. KP has a developed system of health promotion, its health plans cover a large number of preventive examinations, and its clients can attend a wide range of health education programs.

KP offers educational programs for international health professionals to familiarize them with the KP system of healthcare delivery and services. I visited KP health education departments, had an opportunity to engage with KP managers at different levels of the corporate hierarchy and attended the conference **“Integration, Innovation, and Information Systems in Health Care”**. My objective was to enlarge my knowledge of strategies and methods of health promotion of a leading American health insurance provider.

Brief Evaluation Statement

My main objective was to gain new knowledge and experience in health promotion and preventive health care. My objective was fully met. I learned new ways to evaluate health outcomes and gained valuable insights into the system of healthcare delivery, health promotion, and preventive care strategies at KP, a leading HMO.

Detailed Description and Time Schedule

I arrived in Boston on the 29th of June 2010. The Summer Session of Harvard School of Public Health started on the 1st of July and ended on the 13th of August. Lessons were held each weekday. HSPH course **‘Measuring Health Outcomes’** focused on the research methods used for analyzing different health outcomes. I learned various designs, measures, analytical and statistical methods required for evaluating healthcare outcomes, health promotion and other healthcare interventions. I participated in discussions on a wide range of health measures (quality of life, satisfaction with care or intervention, functional health status etc.) I found it very useful for my future work.

HSPS course **“Research in Social and Behavioral Health”** focused on measures used for evaluating health related behavior. It explored various practical applications, design and administration of surveys. It discussed recommendations concerning design and administration of surveys mostly in the American context. Nevertheless, many recommendations were general and can be useful in administering surveys in the Czech Republic.

The coursework was fast paced, nevertheless, the atmosphere at HSPS was very supportive and I found learning about projects and ideas of other participants very productive. I also got a valuable feedback on my ideas concerning promotion of preventive care in clients of my insurance company. I am satisfied with the experience during my executive training at HSPH. I had a great opportunity to discuss differences in the delivery of health care in different countries and the strategies of health promotion and preventive health care. I extended my knowledge of the evaluation methods of health outcomes and of the implementation of research tools and survey designs.

After finishing HSPH part of my program I moved to California where I stayed until 26th of August. I visited KP in Santa Rosa and Oakland. I studied the KP system of health promotion and health education and participated in several health promotion workshops, lectures and courses organized within KP educational programs for employees and clients.

I learned about KP standards and guidelines of health promotion and about the ways of meeting standards and KP goals in health promotion. I engaged with KP staff at different levels of corporate hierarchy and obtained valuable information most useful for my future work. With my short summer stay at KP, I finished the first part of my individual program and returned back home to the Czech Republic.

The second part of my program commenced on October 23, 2010 and lasted for two weeks. I flew to San Francisco, California to attend KP international educational program **“Integration, Innovation, and Information Systems in Health Care”** and followed up on my previous engagement with KP. Participants from 20 countries all around the world participated in the training program. KP

presented its unique system of healthcare delivery, covering topics ranging from the financing of healthcare, evidence-based medicine, population care medicine, system innovations and integration issues, to improving health outcomes, reducing cost, self-care and health promotion. The program was well organized, open to a broad discussion. Speakers, executive directors and managers of KP divisions, provided participants with practical and really valuable information. For example, the principles and philosophy of health promotion was presented by David S. Sobel, Medical Director of Patient Education and Health Promotion, person with extensive credentials in health promotion and research. As part of the program I visited Garfield Innovation Center where a lot of new KP tools and measures are developed.

The KP training program and study visits exceeded my expectations. I received full and precise information and became well acquainted with the KP healthcare system and the role of prevention in it. Moreover, I had a good opportunity to share ideas and experience with healthcare professionals from all over the world. My short internship was very inspirational and gave me ideas for my future work. I established several professional contacts. I am glad that I had the opportunity to make two visits to KP. This helped me to strengthen my professional contacts at KP.

An important objective of my program was to learn about effective measures in health promotion and preventive health care, and strategies and methods of their effective implementation in the Czech health insurance system. Clearly simply applying KP system of healthcare and health promotion delivery would be impossible in the Czech healthcare system. Still, I found many of the KP approaches very inspirational for my own work. I believe to have learned a lot to help me to improve health promotion programs of Revírní bratrská pokladna.

Organization

My program consisted of two visits. The first one in the summer 2010 lasted two months, the second in the fall 2010 lasted for two weeks. I stayed in three locations during my program (Boston, Massachusetts; Santa Rosa and San Francisco, California). I had to arrange accommodations in all those cities. Accommodation cost can be very diverse. For a short-term stay it is difficult to rent a flat and in such a case the cheapest alternative seemed to be a hostel private room. The accommodations were not exceptional but it was sufficient for me.

As mentioned above, the most challenging part of my program was to establish suitable contacts with American Partners. This took me several months. On the other hand the delay was beneficial as I had more time to make suitable arrangements to fit the program to my professional needs. My program lasted two and a half months and it fully met my objectives.

Program Cost

Item	Cost Estimate in US\$	Actual Cost in US\$
Executive training seminars	4,500	4,480
Internship	3,000	3,000
Administrative fees (visa,	1,000	830
International travel	3,800	2,840
Local transportation	700	390
Medical insurance	1,000	350
Monthly maintenance	8,000	7,800
Contingency/Miscellaneous	1,000	370
Total	23,000	20,060

I paid less for international travel and medical insurance than I had expected. The reason was that I bought the medical insurance together with the flight tickets in a package, which was cheaper. Similarly, the flight tickets for my second journey were cheaper too because it was low season.

Program Benefits

I got a valuable experience and inspiration for my work. The program also helped me gain support for my earlier ideas and projects by making them more specific and realistic. I have already used my newly gained experience in the proposal of health promotion activities for our clients. I have designed a project of health education and self-care support. My intention in this proposal is to use modern communication technologies in health education. The initial project proposal has already been accepted. Due to its character it could be beneficial on a large scale, i.e. have a nationwide impact.

In addition, I intend to promote preventive healthcare in our clients to ensure prevention is more successful. I hope that especially the number of women undergoing preventive gynecological examinations will be higher than it is now. I believe the expected benefits of my program will be noticed toward the end of 2011 and in 2012.

Risks

At the time of writing my individual program proposal I expected that the main risk with the implementation of new approaches and programs by Revírní Bratrská Pokladna would be reluctance to implement my proposals for insurance policy changes. Although the risk for future projects still exists, most of my earlier plans and ideas have support and some have already been accepted. I am sure my experience gained through the Young Leaders Program has played a role in it.