

Health Policy Discussion: RAND Corporation

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Initial Post

Website: http://www.rand.org/pubs/external_publications/EP20030705.html

RAND Corporation is organization that strives to improve policy with research and analysis. Emblazoned alongside its logo is its slogan, “Objective Analysis. Effective Solutions.” The corporation has pride in conducting rigorous research and providing analysis so that policies may be strengthened. It began as Project RAND, a research division of the Douglas Aircraft Company during World War II. On May 14, 1948, the division detached from the company, changed its name to RAND Corporation, and has been an independent/private, nonprofit, and nonpartisan organization since. This neutral position has allowed the organization to cater to a worldwide clientele, and they receive funding from government agencies, foundations, and the private-sector. The breadth of its research is wide and includes energy, education, health, justice, environment, international affairs, and military affairs. RAND Corporation declares its mission: "To help improve policy and decision making through research and analysis." The values at its core is quality and objectivity.

One policy focus that RAND Corporation identifies is health literacy. It acknowledges health literacy to be a major focus for having an effect on the people's health maintenance. According to RAND Corporation and its researchers, America should aim for health literacy for all its people. Health literacy would imply that patients should be able to read, understand what health providers teach, understand how to care for their disease, cooperate with health staff in their care, identify sickness signs in order to seek treatment sooner, and critically think about health information. A health-literate America would not be achieved quickly, so interventions should take place over time as the population ages. RAND Corporation also describes health literacy to be both its own means and end to improve health care. The organization's stance is comprehensive and provides a standard for what health literacy could be, but it aims health literacy to an adult population. While adults are indeed an important target, health literacy should also extend to youth. This population is usually reliant on parents to get health care and take medication (Lambert & Keogh, 2014). Health literacy is low adolescent age and younger (Lambert & Keogh, 2014). Both parent and child could be taught correct care for the child's health care. This could especially be the case when the child has an early-onset chronic sickness, such as diabetes mellitus type I. Thus, policy for health literacy could expand to include both young and old clients.

References

- Lambert, V., & Keogh, D. (2014). Health literacy and its importance for effective communication. *Nursing Children & Young People*, 26(3), 31-37.
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Response to Another Student

RAND Corporation's stance on vaccination is agreeable, and providing incentives to encourage vaccination sounds like it would promote vaccination. The understanding that most "anti-vaxxers" are actually hesitant parents is an opportunity for education. Health providers need to inform patients what is given to their patients and dispel misinformation. However, if parents do not trust the vaccines themselves, how does one communicate the benefits of vaccination? One recommendation that may be added to RAND Corporation's suggestions is to educate via social media. The Netherlands had an outbreak of measles in 2013, and researchers analyzed the reaction on social media, such as Twitter (Mollema et al., 2015). The top themes that researchers found following the Dutch National Institute for Public Health and the Environment's measles outbreak announcement was a reaction to the announcement, followed by sentiments to perform a preventative measure. If health providers and the health care community give public advice via social media, then information has the potential to quickly reach an individual. Then, the individuals can relay information between people they trust. Public education is a priority in health maintenance and prevention, but the correct avenues must be used.

References

Mollema, L., Harmsen, I. A., Broekhuizen, E., Clijnk, R., De Melker, H., Paulussen, T., & ... Das, E. (2015). Disease detection or public opinion reflection? Content analysis of tweets, other social media, and online newspapers during the measles outbreak in the Netherlands in 2013. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 17(5), e128. doi:10.2196/jmir.3863