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Management of Health Facility-Based Patient Transport Services in Ankole Region of Uganda

Transport is not only an expensive resource, but is also critical to effective health care delivery. A lack of transport and the poor use of existing vehicles can lead to problems such as difficulties in referring patients between facilities. The study examined the management of facility-based patient transport by health facilities in Ankole region. The study was guided by four objectives; to establish the administrative practices for patient transport services by health facilities in Ankole region, Uganda; to find out the performance frameworks used by different health facilities for patient transport services management in Ankole region, Uganda; to explore the existing performance measures of patient transport services of different health facilities in Ankole region, Uganda and to explore the challenges associated with the management of patient transport services. The study used a descriptive survey design with both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The study data were collected using a structured questionnaire, observation and record check list. The data were collected from health unit staff and through reviewing records. It was analysed using frequency counts, percentages, cross tabulation and reported using text, tables and charts.

The findings showed that there is a positive, moderate and significant relationship between health units' administrative practices $R\ 0.38\ (0.05)$, performance frameworks $R\ 0.58\ (p \leq 0.05)$, performance measures $R\ 0.68\ (p \leq 0.05)$ and respondents' satisfaction with their patient transport services. All health facilities' leadership had some administrative practices targeting proper patient transport services like meetings, allocation of staff, vehicle maintenance scheduling and controls for vehicle use. There were varying performance frameworks and measures from one health facility to another as reported in this study. All health facilities' vehicles were aging with no plan for replacing them, vehicles were being used for other purposes most of the time (70%), and were consequently unavailable most of the time, guidelines for PTS were not available, no specific staff for PTS in 19

most health units nevertheless patients were being accompanied by qualified staff but untrained in basic lifesaving skills, patient transportation records and reporting were rare, faced several challenges in patient transport. The study concluded that patient transport administrative practices, performance frameworks and performance measures are positively correlated with improvement of patient transport services and are hence vital in patient safety and survival. They enable health facilities and health providers to eliminate various errors thus promoting efficiency in patient transport services' management. There were challenges faced by health facilities in the management of patient transport services which among others included: aging vehicles with limited maintenance and inadequate resources for PTS. The study recommends that health units should institute patient transport information systems to enable evidence-based management and continuous quality improvement. Strengthening and enforcement of administrative practices to improve the management of patient transport services. Formulation by the ministry of health of patient transport services guidelines, regulations, performance frameworks and measures that will help to check the poor management of health facility-based patient transport services.

Key Words: Management, Health Facility, Patient, Transport Services, Ankole Region.