

Lessons learned from developing an educational intervention for primary care during the COVID-19 pandemic in Chile

Authors: Trinidad Rodriguez* (1,2,3) Carolina Rain (2)

Affiliations:

1. Catholic University of Chile, Department of Family Medicine
2. Catholic University of Chile, ANCORA-UC Health Innovation Center
3. Besroure Centre for Global Family Medicine, College of Family Physicians of Canada

ABSTRACT

Background: ANCORA-UC Health Innovation Center (CISAUC) works on the design, implementation and evaluation of innovative health care models in Chile. In order to address gaps in the current operating model for primary care, the team is developing a comprehensive strategy for the care of pregnant women, infants, children and adolescents, with a focus on patient-centeredness.

Description: The proposed strategy includes a training program for primary care health workers, to address known gaps between knowledge and practice. The training program will provide health teams with knowledge and skills improvement and a space for reflective practice. Implementation was planned for 2020, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic it was postponed and transformed to an online training program. Lessons learned from this process are presented in the desire to help other teams facing similar challenges.

Lessons learned: The use of technology allowed contact with other educational teams dealing with similar issues, facilitating sharing of experiences, mentoring and peer support. Also, it made collaboration possible, through video recorded lessons accompanied with distant synchronous activities. Redesign of the program allowed further development of potential areas of improvement, taking into consideration the changes in educational context. Having a partner engaged in this process implied reaching common ground and to form a shared vision about what to transform in the new program model and how to do it. The main challenge encountered was in the area of providing effective teaching and instruction for communication and interpersonal skills in a completely online environment, without “real-world” practice.

Conclusion/Next steps: The COVID-19 pandemic has completely changed our practices and approach to supporting training of health care workers. Multidisciplinary work, networking with peers and mentors and finding creative solutions to problems were found to be key to a successful adaptation in this changing context. Online education is now a reality and it allows us to deliver continuing education programs even in times of social distancing. In the future, it will be necessary to evaluate if this approach is as effective as in-person training programs for building capacity, changing practices and increasing satisfaction of healthcare users.