

Provider Networks

INCREASING ACCESS AND QUALITY OF CARE



COMMERCIAL MARKET STRATEGIES
NEW DIRECTIONS IN REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH





What is a provider network?

Provider Networks are an affiliation of health providers (for-profit or non-profit) under an umbrella brand name that serves as a guarantee of quality for a defined package of services at known prices. Private provider networks can evolve into franchising programs that have a controlling organization (franchiser) providing on-going monitoring and technical support to the franchised providers.

Why are provider networks important?

Private provider networks can be instrumental in improving access to affordable high quality family planning and other health services on a large scale. Provider networks facilitate the delivery of services that require the involvement of skilled providers and where clients need more counseling, guidance and professional service (e.g. long term family planning methods). A network of private providers can have a distinct brand name, logo and marketing strategy, which can result in greater demand for their services.

What can CMS provider network activities achieve?

Provider networks can contribute to positive health outcomes by improving access to high quality family planning and other health services. CMS activities related with provider networks are aimed at removing barriers on both the demand and supply sides. The marketing and promotion for the network helps in creating awareness and demand for services. On the other hand, the supply side is strengthened by provider training and on-going quality monitoring. The expected result is in an overall increase in the use of high quality reproductive health services by the target population

What can CMS do in the provider networks area?

CMS can do two things: (1) establish provider networks, or (2) provide technical assistance to existing networks. CMS provider network services include:

ACCESS TO CLINICAL TRAINING

Through its affiliation with Engender Health and local training organizations, CMS can provide clinical training in reproductive health services.

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

CMS has developed a business management curriculum and a mini course in costing and financial projections for private providers. CMS also helps develop pricing and cost-sharing mechanisms to ensure that target populations have access to affordable health services.

LINKAGES TO RELIABLE SOURCES OF CONTRACEPTIVES AND OTHER SUPPLIES

CMS has experience in linking providers with affordable sources of supplies including linking with in-country social marketing programs, the pharmaceutical industry and local NGOs.

LINKAGES TO HEALTH FINANCING OPPORTUNITIES

CMS can assist networks to more efficiently negotiate with private or public health insurance plans. Health insurance plans also prefer to contract with a group of providers that can reach a large volume of plan members, rather than providers on an individual basis. Moreover consolidated networks are of less risk to insurance plans, so they can negotiate for better terms and conditions.

PROMOTION OF SERVICES THROUGH BRANDING AND MARKETING

Through its consortium members, CMS provides technical assistance in demand creation strategies including the branding and marketing of provider networks

ACCESS TO CREDIT

When part of a network of service providers, an individual provider has increased access to credit through the Summa Foundation. The Summa Foundation is more likely to grant a loan to a network provider because higher volumes, lower unit costs and improved quality result in reduced financial risk.

NICARAGUA

FRANCHISED CLINIC NETWORK: In response to the devastation of the health care system caused by Hurricane Mitch in October 1998, CMS received funding to design, build and put in place a network of six franchised and largely self-financing health clinics. The first clinic was opened in Tipitapa in March of 2001. The six network clinics are strategically located in lower to middle income areas affected by the Hurricane. These areas are currently underserved by the existing public health system. The new clinics provide high quality, low cost preventive and curative services to lower and middle-income consumers. All clinics operate 24 hours a day and offer OB/GYN and pediatric services, on-site pharmacy, on-site lab and dental services, minor ambulatory surgery, immunization and STD services. In the first three months, over 4000 patients received health services at three of the new clinics. The network of clinics is promoted under the brand name of the CMS local partner, PROFAMILIA. This International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) affiliate is a well-known and respected Nicaraguan NGO. The six clinics will bring the total PROFAMILIA network to 18 clinics.



Commercial Market Strategies (CMS) is a USAID-funded project that aims to increase access to and demand for reproductive health and family planning in developing countries through the private sector.



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RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

CMS conducts research at all stages of network development. Baseline research helps determine the health needs and health-seeking behavior of the target population, optimal locations for providers, effective ways to market services, and the development of a brand name/logo. Research with providers is aimed at determining what services are offered, expectations from the network, and potential areas for improvement. Routine monitoring systems are designed to facilitate network management and provide an opportunity for corrective action. The evaluation component uses a rigorous design to assess the health impact of the network as measured by service access, and service quality.

Contact CMS

Contact CMS to explore how our reproductive health and private sector expertise can help increase the impact of your reproductive health programs. Visit our web site, www.cmsproject.com, for more information about the project, our current country programs and CMS research publications (available for download).

NEPAL NURSE AND PARAMEDIC NETWORK: The objective of the pilot project in Rupandehi district of Nepal is to improve access to high quality reproductive health services through a network of private nurses and paramedics. There is a high unmet need for family planning (30 percent) and other reproductive health services (only four percent of the deliveries are attended by trained personnel) in the district with a population of 650,690. Therefore CMS will train, network and promote 70 private providers. In addition, CMS will provide on-going quality monitoring and marketing support to the network. Quality will be monitored using mystery clients, as well as community coordinators who will observe service provision and administer detailed checklists developed by the National Health Training Center. In order to ensure access to a comprehensive package of services, the nurse and paramedic network will be linked to the existing physician network through a referral system. The project is currently in the training and marketing phase and will be officially launched in Fall, 2001.