

# **Project Proposal for improving communication skills of Medical officers in Sri Lanka**

## **Background:**

Communication skills are identified as an essential component for a medical professional worldwide. In many countries training in communication skills is mandatory before assuming a post as a medical officer.

According to the World Health Organization, a health system consists of 06 building blocks:

1. Service delivery
2. Health workforce
3. Information and research
4. Healthcare financing
5. Leadership./ governance
6. Medical products and technologies

Strengthening a health system means addressing the constraints of the above building blocks. Ensuring the quality of communication would directly strengthen No 1 and 5 blocks while indirectly affect the others positively as well.

On successful completion of internship medical officers are given permanent posts in Ministry of health as post-interns. Afterwards they will involve in serving the public throughout the country. Thus, training the doctors who are awaiting their appointments would be a worthy attempt to uplift the quality of the health system.

The analysis of events which recently gained adverse publicity by media revealed that effective communication would have prevented such incidents to a greater extent. Thus, improving the aspects related to the communication skills of doctors, would conserve a great deal of time, money and public faith for the ministry of health.

## **Introduction of “Communication Skills Program”-**

Moving beyond the traditional scope of trade unionism, The Government Medical Officers’ association (GMOA) has taken an initiative to ensure the standards of patients care delivery by introducing the “Good Intern Program”, earlier in year 2013.

Improving communication skills will be the next step of capacity building among medical professionals in Sri Lanka.

- Step 01 – Two groups of master trainers were trained at Health Education Bureau in September 2013
- Step 02 – In November 2013 these trainers were evaluated and course materials were developed at NIHS
- Step 03 – Communication skills and management training programme for post interns held on 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> of February 2014..
- Step 04 –Communication skills and management training programme for medical officers in Western province on 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> of March 2014.

### **Justification-**

Formal training in communication skills is not included in current undergraduate or postgraduate medical curricula. However, it is identified as an essential component of a medical professional. Global literature has proved that communication skills can be learned and improved. This in service training programme intends to bridge this identified gap.

### **Goal of training communication skills**

A generation of self-motivated, trained Medical Officers with good communication skills and public relations who contribute to raise the patient satisfaction as well as the efficiency of the health system

### **Main objective of training communication skills**

To improve the knowledge, inculcate positive attitudes of post-intern doctors on effective communication and empower them with essential skills for achieving it.

### **Cost-benefit analysis of communication skills training:**

Complexity of the health care market necessitates the government to intervene in delivering an efficient as well as equitable healthcare delivery. Communication skills training is an ample opportunity to produce a productive health labor force in the form of “Medical Officers” who would maximize the utility of the patients while maintaining an adequate satisfaction by themselves. The benefits of this program can be categorized as:

❖ For the patients:

Improved service delivery

Increased responsive of the doctors for their perceptions

Ensured compliance with improved communication skills

❖ For the hospitals:

Increased client satisfaction

Reduction of inter-staff conflicts

Reduction of adverse publicity by media

❖ For the country:

Overall image regarding health care delivery will improve

Quality and equity of healthcare will improve

❖ For the doctors:

Improved satisfaction and efficient service delivery

Reduce the incidence of legal cases.

**The Logical Framework Matrix of phase 03 of Communication and Managment Skills Program-**

Narrative summary		Indicator	Source and means of verification	Assumptions
<b>Goal</b>	A generation of self-motivated, trained Medical Officers with good communication skills and public relations who contribute to raise the patient satisfaction as well as the efficiency of the health system	Evaluations given by the peers, other staff and patients	Review meetings and day today reporting	
<b>Objective</b>	To improve the knowledge, inculcate positive attitudes of doctors on effective communication and empower them with essential skills for achieving it.	Self-evaluations of the participants as well as from the consultants	Pre and post assessments of the self-awareness and the pre and post evaluations of the consultants	Maximum participation of the medical officers
<b>Output</b>	To conduct communication skills workshops island wide	Success of the implementation of the programs	No of participants  No of learning activities done  Feedback of the participants	Financial resources finalized

Narrative summary		Indicator	Source and means of verification	Assumptions
<b>Activities</b>	1.Conduction of research projects 2.Get the logistics prepared 3.Program communication to the post-interns 4.Getting the content area specified 5.Formulating the booklet	<b>Resources:</b> Questionnaires, Research assistant, Resource personnel, Teaching materials “Effective Communication Skills” guidelines	<b>Costs:</b> (Budget report annexed)	Research activities progress prior to the program  Consensus reached on teaching materials and the content

### Way forward:

The “Communication Skills workshop for medical officers” is supposed to be continued to conduct island wide workshops train healthcare professionals as much as possible.

### Future Programme details

Target groups: 1. Medical officers in Sri lanka

2. Post intern proper and repeat batches

Date : As requested by doctors in the district or province