

Training Private Providers to Improve Access to Quality Contraceptive Services

PROFIT has been working in Romania and Zimbabwe to maximize consumers' access to quality contraceptive services from private physicians, pharmacists, and nurse/midwives. As part of this effort, PROFIT has trained private providers in the safe and effective use of contraceptives, interpersonal communication skills to allow them to educate their clients about modern contraceptives, and basic inventory and cash management skills to help ensure adequate supplies of a variety of appropriately priced contraceptives. The training programs have been developed and conducted in partnership with associations of health professionals, universities, and private businesses. PROFIT has trained a total of about 100 physicians, 300 pharmacists, and 50 nurse/midwives in the two countries and has developed guides for pharmacists on contraceptive technology and quality client services.

PROFIT has been working in Romania and Zimbabwe to maximize access to quality contraceptive services through private health care providers. To achieve this goal, PROFIT has developed training programs for physicians, pharmacists, and nurse/midwives. The training focuses on three main areas:

- contraceptive technology, to help ensure safe and effective contraceptive use, to allow providers to educate their clients about methods, and to effectively manage clients' side effects if they arise
- interpersonal communication skills, to help providers effectively communicate with their clients to educate them about contraceptives and to help them make informed choices
- business skills, such as basic inventory and cash management, to help ensure adequate supplies of a wide variety of contraceptives at appropriate prices.

**Deloitte Touche
Tohmatsu**



The “BASICS” of the PROFIT Training Program

The participants in the PROFIT training programs in Romania and Zimbabwe have found them effective and relevant. The program’s success is due to six key elements that comprise the core — or “BASICS” — of the training program:

B Best Practices

Best practices have been included in the three main training areas: contraceptive education, interpersonal communication skills, and basic business skills. By learning and following the best practices in these fields, providers are capable of delivering safe, effective, and efficient contraceptive services.

A Assessment

PROFIT determined the training’s content by assessing participants’ needs using surveys, focus groups, and other research methods and then developing training courses to address those needs. Conducting training that was relevant increased its effectiveness in changing the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of the private providers who participated.

S Selection

PROFIT selected the participants in the training workshops after reviewing applications to maximize the effect of the courses on consumers’ access to quality contraceptive services. The criteria included geographic location, facility size, and client demand.

I Interaction

The program has encouraged interaction among trainers and participants, during and after the training sessions, particularly through the use of participatory training methods and trainers from the same geographic areas as the participants. This has helped create professional networks that can facilitate a sharing of skills and experiences as well as provide support over time.

C Competence

The participants’ competence was augmented and reinforced during the training by role modeling, practicing new skills, conducting self-assessments, receiving feedback from other participants, and using checklists to assess their skill level in clinical procedures, interpersonal communication, and business practices. The participants leave the training course feeling confident in their ability to provide quality services.

S Sustainability

The training courses have been designed to incorporate elements that increase the likelihood that they will continue after the end of PROFIT in September 1997. For

example, PROFIT ran a training of trainers (T-O-T) workshop in Romania and, in Zimbabwe, recruited trainees from the national pharmacists' association, pharmaceutical distributors, and university departments, and organized a coordinating council with representatives from the public and private sectors to oversee the project.

Lessons Learned

- Private sector physicians, pharmacists, and nurse/midwives are more likely to use effective communication with and counsel their clients after they are trained in the principles, concepts, and techniques of providing quality services. The PROFIT training course included this reminder to practitioners:

What you provide (complete and accurate information) + How you provide it (communication skills, polite and caring manner) = QUALITY SERVICE! You can ensure safe, effective, continued contraceptive use by providing complete and accurate information in a polite and caring manner!

- Private providers need business skills to run their practices efficiently. Since they do not make a living solely by selling contraceptives or providing contraceptive services, they need training in the skills that will improve the quality of their full range of services or products.
- Business skills are best taught using an integrated, applied approach. Most previous training programs have focused on either contraceptive technology or business skills. Integrating both technical and business-management skills in a single training course can help providers understand how each set of skills contributes to improving the quality of their services. This can be done, for example, through a training exercise that involves developing a marketing plan for a particular service or contraceptive product.
- The selection of appropriate trainers and participants using defined criteria is essential. Having trainers who are representative of the participants and/or who come from the geographic areas where the training takes place can facilitate dialogue, encourage its continuance, and ensure informal follow-up. Including respected professionals and opinion leaders in the training sessions lends credibility to the program and stimulates participation.
- In the private sector, time is money. Training programs for private practitioners should be held at convenient times and locations. Providers are able and willing to participate fully in training sessions that fit into their schedules (i.e., held on the weekend).
- A modular curriculum design breaks training into separate and distinct topics. This allows for flexibility in the training schedule and adaptation of participants' needs for more or less information, depending on their knowledge and skill levels.
- Quantitative checklists should be used to assess competency. Such checklists establish a minimum standard of performance and can legitimize the content of a training program, in part, by setting objective standards for evaluating the results. Moreover, private providers

are comfortable using such checklists and may use them in their own facilities to assess their performance and skills or those of their colleagues and subordinates. However, quantitative checklists should complement, not replace, the use of qualitative measures or indicators of quality such as providers' mannerisms, body language, tone, or attitude toward patients/clients.