Financial Incentives and Motivation

“What we do is the same but how we do it is different”

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There is an ongoing debate in the scientific community whether financial incentives have unintended consequences, for example less internal motivation and damaged professional autonomy. Little is however known about the views among health care professionals in primary care. Early findings show that financial incentives are no source of motivation, but can act as drivers for innovative quality improvements.

Primary Care Reform in Sweden
A new primary health care reform was put in practice 2010. The reform was called Vårdvalet and involved two important changes: 1) increased freedom of choice and some privatization of primary health care and 2) the introduction of some financial incentives at primary care level.

Aim
The purpose of the present study is to examine the relationship between financial incentives and professionals’ perceived quality of care and motivation. In other words, to examine how primary care professionals engage with financial incentives.

Research Design
A case study with semi-structured interviews, which has been preliminary analyzed with qualitative thematic analysis. At each primary care practice managers and health care professionals participated (physicians, nurses, nurses’ assistants, care administrators, physical therapists, occupational therapists, and psychotherapists). 36 out of 51 participants has so far been analyzed.

Research Setting
The case entails six primary care practices in Region Jönköping county, situated in the south of Sweden. All primary care is taxed financed. Three public county-driven, two private owned by personnel, and one non-profit unit.

Conclusions
Units with greater cooperation, increased professional responsibility, room for maneuver, and good finances seem to construct enabling factors for a more positive view on financial incentives.

There is no one size fits all solution on how to create financial incentives that contribute to quality care, but if we listen to the voices of health professionals we can get important clues on how the design could be improved.