Elaboration of a set of indicators of coordination between levels of care

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Introduction
Care coordination supposes one of the greatest challenges for healthcare systems due the increase in healthcare complexity, high specialization and the involvement of a number of services, as well as the increase of patients with chronic diseases and multiple conditions. The aim is to elaborate a set of indicators addressed to measure informational and managerial coordination across levels of care.

Methods
Identification of indicators was conducted in two stages: 1) systematic review of the literature (search on main databases up to May 2011); and 2) review of clinical practice guidelines and other sources of evidence, such as local health services plans. Additionally, the research team developed indicators to cover coordination dimensions not represented, but relevant according the theoretical framework. The indicators were classified according to whether they evaluated the informational or managerial coordination. The set of indicators was discussed at two meetings of experts to assess the criteria of importance, scientific soundness and feasibility and make the final selection before being piloted.

Results
47 indicators were identified and 13 additional indicators were developed. After meetings with experts, the final selection was composed of 34 indicators: Informational coordination indicators evaluate the availability of mechanisms for transferring information (5 structure indicators) and the accessibility and adequacy of shared information (9 process indicators). Managerial coordination indicators evaluate test and treatment coordination, the existence of follow-up consultations after hospital discharge, the adequacy of referrals to specialist, a completed diagnostic trajectory and accessibility across care levels (17 process indicators). Finally, 3 indicators are related to outcomes associated with care coordination, such as avoidable hospital admissions.

Conclusions
A set of 42 indicators which will allow analyzing the coordination of care between levels has been elaborated and it could be applied in any organization that provides a continuum of care. Its application in three different health care areas in Catalonia will provide additional data on its reliability and feasibility.

Key messages
- This set of indicators aims to comprehensively measure informational and managerial coordination between levels by addressing aspects related to the structures, processes and outcomes of coordination.
- This set of indicators could be a useful tool to measure care coordination, allowing for comparisons of performance over time and across organisations.