

Introduction to Health Policies

Prepared by Dr. Abdulaziz Alsaedi

MHA611
Healthcare Systems

Lecture 08



Outlines:

- Introduction to health and healthcare systems.
- Achieving effectiveness, efficiency, and equity in healthcare.
- Types of analyzing healthcare.
- Health services research.
- Concepts of health policies.
- Importance of health policies.
- Challenges of developing health policies.
- Patient engagement in health policies.
- Examples of health policies.

Learning Objectives

- Understanding the types of analyzing the healthcare system.
- Understanding the role of health policies in the healthcare system.
- Understanding the role of health services research in developing health policies.
- Understanding the challenges affecting the developing health policies.
- Understanding the benefits of patient engagement in health policies.

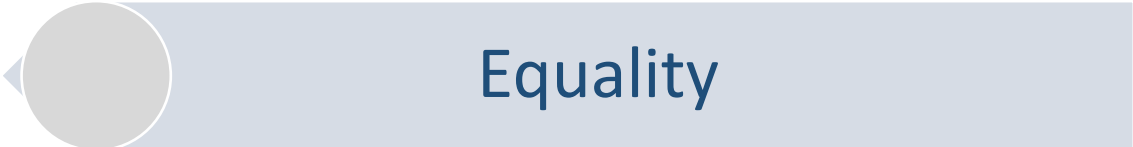
Overview

- **Health** is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.
- **Healthcare System** is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as the sum total of all the organizations, institutions, and resources whose primary purpose is to improve health.
- Therefore, achieving health requires integration, coordination, and incorporation of different ministries, authorities, organizations, agencies, and other stakeholders.

Healthcare Systems Main Objectives



Responsiveness



Equality



Health

1. Responsiveness:

Health system responsiveness refers to how well the system meets the legitimate expectations of the population regarding non-health enhancing aspects of care. It encompasses:

- Respectful treatment.
- Communication.
- Confidentiality.
- Quality of basic amenities.

2. Fairness:

Fairness in healthcare systems primarily relates to:

- **Fair financing:** Ensuring that the financial burden of healthcare is distributed equitably across the population, protecting individuals from catastrophic health expenditures.
- **Equity in access:** Providing equal access to healthcare services regardless of socioeconomic status, geographic location, or other demographic factors.
- **Non-discrimination:** Treating all patients with equal respect and dignity, regardless of their background or circumstances.

3. Health:

The ultimate goal of any healthcare system is to improve and maintain the health of the population it serves. This includes:

- Reducing morbidity and mortality rates
- Improving quality of life
- Increasing life expectancy
- Preventing and controlling diseases

Healthcare systems aim to achieve these outcomes through various means, including preventive care, curative treatments, and health promotion activities.

Chapter

08

Effectiveness, Efficiency, and Equity

Effectiveness:

- Doing the right things.
- Effectiveness in healthcare refers to the extent to which interventions, procedures, or services produce the intended health outcomes when deployed in real-world settings. Key aspects include:
 - **Clinical effectiveness:** The degree to which medical interventions improve health outcomes for patients.
 - **Population health impact:** How well the healthcare system improves overall health metrics like life expectancy and quality of life.

Efficiency:

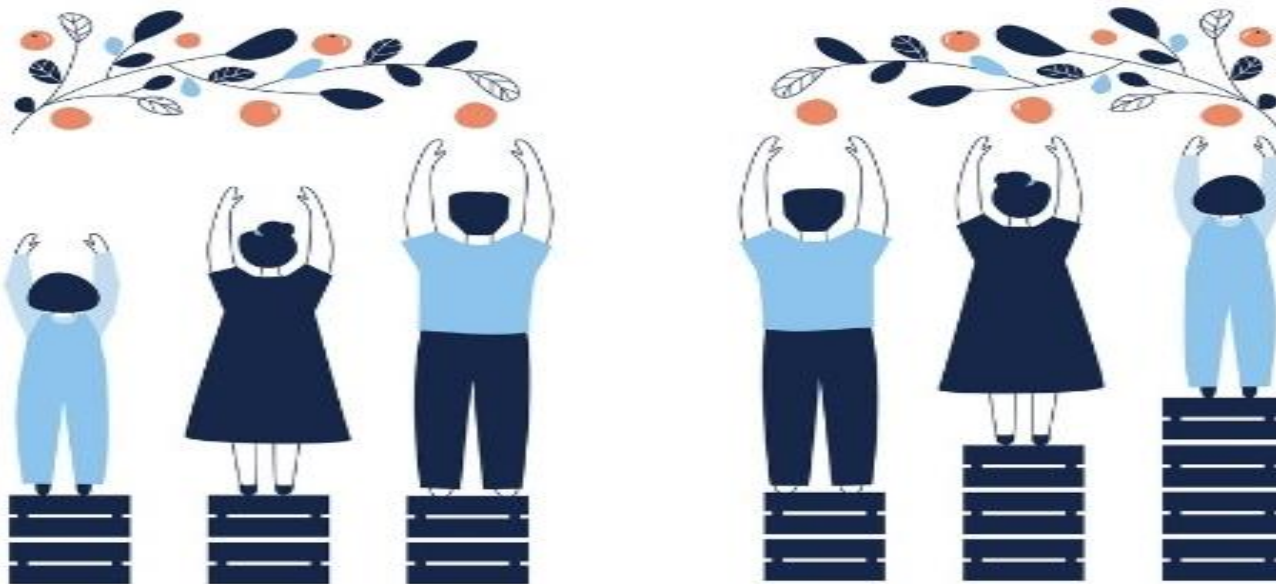
Efficiency relates to maximizing health outcomes while minimizing resource use and costs. Indicators of inefficiency in healthcare systems include:

- Higher prices for pharmaceuticals and medical services compared to peer countries.
- Underutilization of facilities and equipment.
- High administrative costs, especially in insurance systems.
- Use of higher-cost services when lower-cost options would suffice.

Equity:

Health equity is achieved when everyone can attain their full potential for health and well-being, without disadvantage due to social position or other socially determined circumstances. It requires:

- Eliminating unfair, avoidable, or remediable differences among groups
- Addressing social determinants of health.
- Providing equal access to quality healthcare services.

Equity:

Consider that:

- Some people take **more** than what they need.
- Some people take **less** than what they need.
- Some people have **nothing** to take at all.

In healthcare, what do we need: Equity or Equality?

Types of Analysis in Healthcare



Types of Analysis

MACRO



MICRO



Types of Analysis

At the Micro level (Clinical):

Effectiveness (Clinical effectiveness):

Improving the health of individual patients through medical care services.

Efficiency (Production efficiency):

Combining inputs to produce services at the lowest cost. (How much has been paid for healthcare?).

Equity (Procedural equity):

Maximizing the fairness in the distribution of services across groups.

Types of Analysis

At the Macro level (Population):

Effectiveness (Population effectiveness):

Improving the health of population and communities through medical and/ or non-medical services.

Efficiency (Allocative efficiency):

Combining inputs to produce maximum health improvement given available resources.

(How much improvement was achieved with the minimum payment?)

Equity (Substantial equity):

Minimizing the disparities in the distribution of health across groups.

Types of Analysis

How to link the Three: Effectiveness, Efficiency, and Equity to Reach Population Health?

1. Political processes:

Such as Obama care, ... etc.

2. Best utilizing the current resources:

Trying to maximize the outcome by utilizing the available resources.

Healthcare Research:

Conducting intensive research to evaluate the current situation and making some recommendations.

Healthcare Research

Health Services Research:

- Health services research is defined as: **"A multidisciplinary field of inquiry, both basic and applied, that examines access to, and the use, costs, quality, delivery, organization, financing, and outcomes of healthcare services to produce new knowledge about the structure, processes, and effects of health services for individuals and populations."**
- Health services research continues to evolve and adapt to the changing healthcare landscape, playing a vital role in shaping the future of healthcare delivery and policy.

Healthcare Research

Health Services Research:

Health services research covers a wide range of topics, including:

- Health policy evaluation.
- Healthcare financing systems.
- Organizational structures and processes.
- Patient safety and medical errors.
- Health disparities and equity.
- Quality improvement initiatives.
- Health information technology.



Healthcare Research

Relationship Between HSR and Health Policies:

Health Services Research plays several key roles in relation to health policies:

- **Informing Policy Development:**

HSR provides evidence-based insights that policymakers use to craft effective health policies.

- **Evaluating Policy Impact:**

Researchers assess the outcomes and effectiveness of implemented health policies, helping to refine and improve them.

Healthcare Research

Relationship Between HSR and Health Policies:

Health Services Research plays several key roles in relation to health policies:

- **Identifying System Deficiencies:**

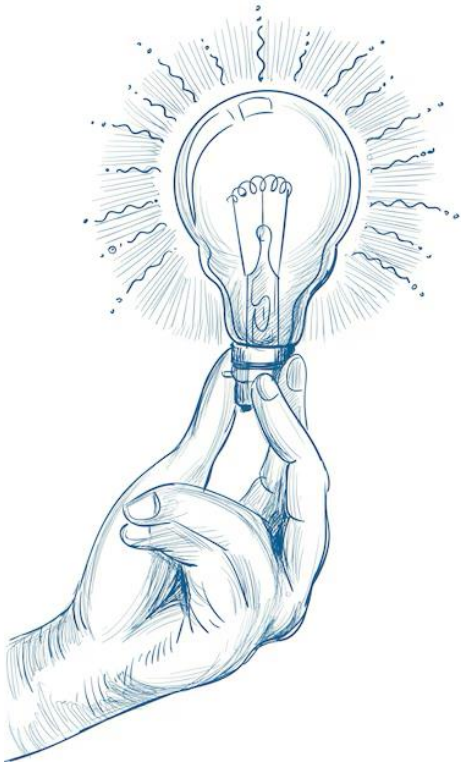
HSR documents deficiencies in patient and population health, as well as in the provision of health services, highlighting areas that require policy intervention.

- **Proposing Solutions:**

Health services researchers seek solutions to problems that adversely affect access to care, quality, safety, and cost of care.

Chapter

08



Concepts of Health Policy

Concepts of Health Policy

Health Policy:

- **Health policy** encompasses the strategic decisions, plans, and actions taken by governments and health organizations to achieve specific health outcomes within a society.
- **Health Policy** includes developing policies to protect public health, strengthen healthcare systems, improve disease prevention, and ensure access to quality care.
- **Health policy** addresses a range of public health issues, from managing infectious diseases to promoting mental health and well-being.

Chapter

08

Importance of Health Policies

Importance of Health Policies

Health policy is essential because of the following:

1. It shapes the framework and guidelines for how healthcare is delivered, financed, and accessed, impacting population health outcomes and the quality of life.
2. Effective health policy ensures that healthcare systems are equipped to address current health needs, manage emergencies, and promote long-term public health.
3. Furthermore, investing in health policy is foundational to economic and social stability; healthier populations are more productive, which in turn supports national development.

Importance of Health Policies

Health policy is essential because of the following:

Health policies play a crucial role in shaping healthcare systems and improving population health. Here are some key reasons why health policies are important:

1. Improve access to healthcare:

Health policies can expand insurance coverage and make healthcare services more accessible and affordable for the population. For example, the Affordable Care Act in the US significantly increased the number of insured Americans.

Importance of Health Policies

Health policy is essential because of the following:

2. Enhance quality of care:

Policies can set standards for healthcare delivery, promote evidence-based practices, and implement quality improvement initiatives. This helps ensure that patients receive high-quality, safe care.

3. Address public health challenges:

Health policies are essential for tackling major public health issues like infectious disease control, chronic disease prevention, and health promotion. They provide frameworks for coordinated action.

Importance of Health Policies

Health policy is essential because of the following:

4. Reduce health disparities:

Well-designed policies can target vulnerable populations and work to reduce inequities in health outcomes between different socioeconomic and demographic groups.

5. Guide resource allocation:

Policies help determine how healthcare resources and funding are distributed across different programs, services, and regions.

Importance of Health Policies

Health policy is essential because of the following:

6. Promote preventive care:

Many health policies emphasize disease prevention and health promotion, which can improve population health and reduce healthcare costs in the long run.

7. Regulate the healthcare industry:

Policies provide oversight of healthcare providers, insurers, pharmaceutical companies, and other industry players to protect patient interests.

Importance of Health Policies

Health policy is essential because of the following:

8. Advance medical research:

Health policies can direct funding and set priorities for medical research and innovation.

9. Respond to health crises:

Policies provide frameworks for emergency preparedness and coordinated responses to public health emergencies like pandemics.

10. Protect patient rights:

It focuses on safeguarding patient privacy, ensuring informed consent, and protecting other patient rights.

Chapter

08

Challenges of Developing Effective Health Policies

Challenges of developing health policies

1. Conceptual challenges:

- Lack of clarity on what integrated care or other health policy concepts actually mean.
- Difficulty in defining and measuring the success of health policies.
- The complexity of healthcare systems makes it challenging to design comprehensive policies.

2. Resource challenges:

- Insufficient funding allocated to health programs and policy implementation.
- Lack of adequate facilities, supplies, and skilled healthcare workers.
- Infrastructure deficiencies, especially in rural/remote areas.

Challenges of developing health policies

3. Political and governance challenges:

- Political instability and changing priorities.
- Corruption undermining policy implementation.
- Poor coordination between different agencies and levels of government.

4. Implementation barriers:

- Gap between policy design and on-the-ground implementation.
- Lack of clear operational guidelines and defined roles/responsibilities.
- Conflicts with existing policies.

Challenges of developing health policies

5. Monitoring and evaluation challenges:

- Lack of systems to track policy outcomes and identify unintended consequences.
- Difficulty in attributing health improvements to specific policies.

6. Empirical/methodological challenges:

- Limited high-quality evidence on the effectiveness of health policy interventions.
- Difficulty in transferring policy successes from one context to another.
- Challenges in measuring the true effects of policy implementation.

How can patient engagement improve health policy effectiveness



Patient Engagement

1. Improved policy design and implementation:

- Incorporating patient perspectives and experiences into policy development can lead to more patient-centered and effective policies.
- Patients can provide valuable insights into real-world challenges and barriers that may not be apparent to policymakers.

2. Enhanced treatment adherence and outcomes:

- Engaged patients are more likely to adhere to treatment plans and follow health recommendations.
- This can lead to better health outcomes and reduced healthcare costs.

Patient Engagement

3. Increased patient satisfaction:

- Policies that actively involve patients tend to result in higher patient satisfaction with healthcare services.
- Satisfied patients are more likely to engage with the healthcare system proactively.

4. Better resource allocation:

- Patient input can help identify areas of greatest need and impact, leading to more efficient use of healthcare resources.
- This can improve the cost-effectiveness of health policies.

Patient Engagement

5. Improved health literacy:

- Engaging patients in policy discussions can increase their health literacy and understanding of the healthcare system.
- This empowers patients to make more informed decisions about their health.

6. Enhanced quality of care:

- Patient engagement can lead to improvements in the quality-of-care delivery, as providers become more responsive to patient needs and preferences.

Patient Engagement

7. Reduced health disparities:

- Involving diverse patient populations in policy development can help address health inequities and improve access to care for underserved groups.

8. Greater accountability:

- Patient engagement creates a feedback loop that can hold healthcare systems and policymakers accountable for policy outcomes.

9. Promotion of preventive care:

- Engaged patients are more likely to participate in preventive care measures, which can reduce the burden on the healthcare system.

Chapter

08



Examples of Health Policies

Examples of Health Policies

Experience of Saudi Arabia:

Saudi Arabia has implemented several significant health policies as part of its vision to transform and improve its healthcare system. Here are some key examples:

- **Unified Health File:** A centralized electronic health record system.
- **Telehealth Services:** Enabling remote medical consultations through text, audio, and video chat.
- **Sehhaty App:** Provides access to vaccination information and allows booking of COVID-19 vaccines.
- Free basic vaccinations for children from birth to school age.
- COVID-19 vaccination program for citizens and residents.

Examples of Health Policies

Experience of United Kingdom:

- **Smoking Ban:** Implemented in 2007, this policy prohibited smoking in enclosed public spaces and workplaces across the UK.
- **Soft Drinks Industry Levy ("Sugar Tax"):** Introduced in 2018, this tax on sugary drinks aims to reduce sugar consumption and combat obesity.
- **Universal Health Coverage:** The UK provides universal health coverage through the National Health Service (NHS), which offers healthcare free at the point of use for all residents.

Examples of Health Policies

Experience of United Arab Emirates:

- **National Policy for Promoting Healthy Lifestyles:**
 - Introduced in 2022.
 - Aims to establish a multi-sectoral national framework to promote healthy lifestyles.
 - Focuses on promoting healthy eating, physical activity, and tobacco control.
 - Goals include improving quality of life, preventing diseases, and reducing mortality risks.
- **Mandatory health insurance for private sector employees.**
- **Development of e-prescribing and home delivery of medication.**

Summary

- Healthcare systems aim to achieve three main objectives which are responsiveness, fairness, and health.
- Healthcare systems are analyzed through the macro and micro levels.
- Healthcare systems should ensure effectiveness, efficiency, and equity in healthcare.
- Health services research plays a vital role in developing health policies.
- Health strategies should pay attention to the challenges of developing effective health policies.
- Patient engagement is crucial in developing and improving the implementation of health policies.
- Countries, such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, have good experience in developing health policies.



Thank You

References

- Thompson, M., & Fairman, A. (2015). Addressing ethical challenges in telehealth and eHealth practices. *Nursing Ethics*, 22(4), 451-468. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0969733014534874>
- Patel, V., Saxena, S., Lund, C., Thornicroft, G., Baingana, F., Bolton, P., ... & Unützer, J. (2018). The Lancet Commission on global mental health and sustainable development. *The Lancet*, 392(10157), 1553-1598. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(18\)31612-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(18)31612-X)
- Thompson, M., & Fairman, A. (2015). Addressing ethical challenges in telehealth and eHealth practices. *Nursing Ethics*, 22(4), 451-468. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0969733014534874>