

Chapter 57

A Systematic Approach towards the Typology of Functions of National Health System: Provision of Functional Model of National Health System

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ABSTRACT

As one of the main national systems in any country, the health system has always been considered by governments. What distinguishes health system from other systems is that its purpose is directly related to the public health. Different countries adopt different structural patterns in this field but one can consider relatively common functions for a national health system which includes all functional aspects for this system. In recent years, attempts have been made for offering a comprehensive model in describing the functions. The OECD determined principles needed to offer an appropriate typology that should be independent of the names of health programs in different countries. In this chapter, it's tried to provide an overview of the proposed models for structures and functions of the health system and to propose a comprehensive model for it with an emphasis on theoretical aspects of public policy-making and binding functions in any national development system. This comprehensive model, provides the possibility to evaluate the success of a health system.

INTRODUCTION

The health system has always been considered by governments seriously. It is a priority in major development plans. Different countries adopt different structural patterns in the health field depending on their circumstances and macro-economic, political and social considerations. But aside from structural differences, one can consider relatively common functions for a national health system which includes

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all functional aspects for this key system. In recent years, attempts have been made for offering a systematic and comprehensive model in describing the functions of the national health system by competent communities, enterprises and experts in the field of health policy. These efforts were directed towards appropriate partitioning of the internal relationship in the health system and explaining the expected purpose(s) of these interactions. In addition, the remarkable point is that there are many factors outside the health system that affect people's health such as poverty, education, political and social infrastructure in a country. Since these factors are affected by external factors, health systems are known as open systems. Thus there are important implications for approaches to these systems from the perspective that they must affect health systems to produce better health outputs or more efficient and fair behaviors. The main functional elements of health systems can be defined at the global level. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) determined principles needed to offer an appropriate typology. This classification should be based on the health system features and independent of the names of health programs in different countries. In this chapter, it's tried to provide an overview of the proposed models for structures and functions of the health systems and to propose a new and comprehensive model for the health system which provides the possibility to evaluate the success of a health system.

BACKGROUND

Various models of the health system can be divided into two sets: structural models and functional models. Next, a brief definition of each of these two types and an overview of the proposed models in each type will be provided.

The Structural Models of the Health System

Using various economic and health indicators, these models classify health systems in different countries. These indices are mainly based on the functions and control knobs raised in conceptual models of the health system. According to the OECD, the method for proposing a new classification for health systems consists of two stages. In the first stage, variables and indicators must be defined to highlight the differences in health systems. In the second stage, these variables must come together to extract meaningful groups based on the above three principles (OECD, 2004). Many attempts have been made in this regard, which will be explained next.

Roemer Model (Roemer, 1956)

Roemer analyzed health systems with a political-institutional approach. Using a historical analysis approach, he grouped health systems at that time. That study examined the relationship between a country's health policies and its economic and institutional status. He offered four groups for health services programs:

1. Free enterprises.
2. Social insurance.
3. Public assistance system.
4. Universal service.

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