

Public Health expenditure and life expectancy in Iran: how equitable and well do we perform?

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Abstract

Background: Providing affordable access to safe and high-quality health care services for entire population (so-called Universal Health Coverage: UHC), in an equitable and efficient manner, has become a priority for countries over the past decade. To do this, it will inevitably require governments spend their limited budgetary resources on this priority and also they improve the efficiency of their health system. During recent years, Iran has taken a series of initiatives to ensure UHC. However, it is unknown that to what extent the country has successfully performed fair and efficient to reach this goal. In order to gain perspective on this issue, we 1) examine whether or not there is disparity in public spending within the country 2) determine the ratio of useful health outcome to total public spending.

Methods: Two indicators, including General Government Health Expenditure (GGHE) per capita, (Purchasing Power Parity: PPP) and Life Expectancy (LE) at birth were selected. Afterward, using data sources including the national consensus and provincial health account, we analyzed provincial inequality in GGHE per capita and LE versus GGHE per capita in Iran (2011). Gini coefficient were used for measuring inequality.

Results: Our results show that while the GGHE per capita, (PPP) varied from 103\$ to 829\$, the distribution of public spending is equitable (Gini coefficient was 0.09). All provinces had the same ratio of LE to GGHE (ranging from 0.1 to 0.2), except one province which had better performance with the highest ratio (0.9).

Conclusion: Given these finding, it could be concluded that the Ministry of Health and Medical Education (MOH&ME) has a fair mechanism to allocate the governmental resources within the country. However, health system at provincial level is not efficient. Since efficiency is critical to sustainability, the country should undertake reforms and initiatives to address this issue. In this route, it is recommended that countries' efforts made to improve the efficiency in their health systems is reviewed. Furthermore, it is suggested that a case-study research is done to find how the top ranked province in efficiency has performed.