

Abstract title: Identifying research priorities for public hospital management in Iran: Use of CHNRI method

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Relevance: This study is relevant to subtheme 2.3: Health and care sustainability supported by applied research and innovation adoption. We will share our experiences on research priority setting for public hospital management in a developing country and try to explore the results to guide national research agenda towards funding priorities for important future research related to public hospital management in Iran.

Context and aims: Hospitals are an essential component of any health system. Hospitals in Iran are faced with many challenges, particularly in the areas of accountability and responsiveness, efficiency, equity and justice, and quality and safety of healthcare services. Hospital care absorbs about 60% of total spending on health in Iran. There are 949 hospitals in the country with 126600 beds in different type of services offered and ownership. Three main providers of hospital services are public hospitals (teaching/non-teaching hospitals affiliated to Ministry of Health and Medical Education-MoHME), private hospitals, and hospitals owned by social security organization (SSO), which constitute around 69%, 12% and 8% of the total hospital beds across the country.

This study aimed to identify national health research priorities for public hospital management in Iran to assist the efficient use of resources toward achieving both national and regional priorities, particularly the recently adopted framework for action for the hospital sector in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. Research priority setting with stakeholders can help direct the limited resources for health research toward priority areas of need. Ensuring transparency of the priority setting process can strengthen legitimacy and credibility for influencing the research agenda. Relevant stakeholders whose values and interests should be respected in setting health research priorities can include patients, caregivers, clinicians, policy makers, representatives from non-governmental organizations and diverse groups may need to be included in research priority setting. It has been emphasized that patients/caregivers (and if relevant the public) need to be directly

involved in the priority setting process, as they have direct experience of the health condition or context and often have different priorities to researchers and clinicians. There is also recognition of the need to involve individuals from vulnerable or marginalized groups, particularly in equity-focused research priority setting exercises. We used the adapted Child Health and Nutrition Research Initiative (CHNRI) method for the setting of research priorities through involving a wide range of stakeholders in the hospital management field.

Methods and Materials: This research was performed in November 2019. Adapting the Child Health and Nutrition Research Initiative (CHNRI) method, this study engaged 39 researchers and/or authorities in the areas related to hospital care, a group of caregivers, and 28 stakeholders from the wider society. They scored 125 proposed research questions using a set of five criteria: impact on health, impact on economy, feasibility, alignment with national or regional priorities, and equity. Participants in the stakeholders' group in this exercise were identified using snowballing in addition to sharing a public invitation in online forums of patients and health-care professionals in Iran.

The invited experts generated and systematically ranked research questions that could potentially assist public hospital in achieving its long-term targets as outlined in upstream documents and major national plans as well as the recently adopted framework for action for the hospital sector in the EMR. After the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak, we repeated the process with a number of participants to identify priorities related to Covid-19 outbreak.

Findings: The top-10 priorities were focused on the research questions relating to: 1) Improving public hospitals efficiency, 2) Reforming providers' payments methods, 3) Containing costs and ensuring quality, 4) Bridging the gap between primary and secondary care, and 5) Improving effective governance for quality and patient safety, 6) Capacity building of hospital managers, 7) equality in the distribution of health resources and services; 8) Increasing patient involvement in care pathways and decision making, 9) enhancing use of information and communication technology, 10) Reinforcing the role of hospitals in health promotion of serving community.

Innovative contribution to policy, practice and/or research: The findings from this research priority setting exercise can help guide national research agenda towards funding priorities for important future research related to public hospital management in Iran. The priority research questions can direct new research initiatives by providing concrete specific suggestions as to where new and existing research resources can best be invested. By setting the priorities with patients, carers, the public and health care professionals, research can look at the issues that really matter to people who are receiving or delivering care in public hospitals. The CHNRI process provided a means of reaching consensus as to the important issues for future research to focus on to improve hospital management.

Has this paper/poster been presented previously? If yes, please indicate where: No, it hasn't.

Please declare any conflict of interest: There is no conflict of interest to declare.

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