

PREFACE

Personal health is an important goal of most people, and the pursuit of health is of growing significance to the US economy and the nation's system of social justice. Thus, health policy has long received attention from government. In the past two decades, the nation experienced a uniquely active period in health policy. The aftermath of this unprecedented era of health reform continues as health policy is enacted, implemented, and modified.

This textbook is written for those interested in health policy, especially the complicated process by which public policy pertaining to health is made. I define *health policy* as authoritative decisions regarding health or the pursuit of health made in the legislative, executive, or judicial branches of government that are intended to direct or influence the actions, behaviors, or decisions of others. The phrase *authoritative decisions* refers to decisions that are made anywhere within the three branches of government—at any level of government—and are within the legitimate purview (which means within the official roles, responsibilities, and authorities) of those making the decisions.

Through a long history of incremental and modest steps, an extensive array of authoritative decisions that make up health policy has evolved in the United States. Although dramatic developments in health policy, especially the emergence of Medicare and Medicaid in 1965, and more recently, the enactment of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) in 2010, have occasionally accelerated this history, health policymaking largely takes the form of slow but persistent evolution and modification. Health policy's role in the pursuit of health is played out in many arenas, because health is determined by many variables: the physical environment in which people live and work, individuals' biology and behavior, social factors, and access to health services. The effects of health policies can be seen in each of these determinants.

At the federal, state, and local levels, governments formulate, implement, and continually modify health policies in an intricately choreographed policymaking process. The purpose of this book is to provide a comprehensive overview of this process. An understanding of it is essential to policy competence. For typical health professionals, this topic is at most a secondary interest. However, a sufficient understanding of policymaking will permit people to effectively analyze the public policy environment that affects them

and their work and to exert some influence in that environment. This understanding is an increasingly important attribute for those whose professional lives are devoted to the pursuit of better health for society and its individual members.

I first developed the model of the health policymaking process presented in this book for the benefit of my students, and I have continued to refine it. The usefulness of the model as a framework for students' understanding of the extraordinarily complicated process of health policymaking stimulated me to present it to a broader audience. The result was the first edition of this book. Now in its sixth edition, the book has been and will continue to be used in health policy courses to provide students with an overview of the policymaking process. The model puts the various aspects of policymaking in perspective and serves as a foundation on which students can build a more detailed understanding of the process and how it is related to decisions that affect them and their patients, clients, and customers.

The structure of this textbook largely reflects the model of the policymaking process. Chapter 1 defines health and health policy and considers their connection. Chapter 2 lays out the context in which policymaking occurs. I call this the policy market. Chapter 3 presents the model of the policymaking process that is the heart of this book. Recognizing their increasing importance in the process, Chapter 4, written by Mary Crossley, discusses the role of the courts in health policy. Chapters 5 through 9 describe in detail specific components of the policymaking process. Chapters 5 and 6 cover agenda setting and development of legislation which comprise policy formulation. Chapter 7 includes a general discussion of policy implementation and the organizations responsible for implementation. Chapter 8 is devoted to the implementation activities of designing, rulemaking, operating, and evaluating. Chapter 9 addresses policy modification, reflecting the fact that all policies are subject to modification. Chapter 10 is devoted to the development of a degree of competence in policymaking for health professionals. This competence is needed by those who wish to have a say in the nation's health policy.

The book includes 30 appendixes, which are intended to enrich the reader's learning experience. Appendix 1 provides an overview of the Affordable Care Act and Appendixes 2 and 3 provide overviews of Medicare and Medicaid, reflecting the importance of these health policies. Appendix 4 lists chronologically the United States' most important federal laws pertaining to health. In addition to providing synopses of these laws, the chronology illustrates several important characteristics of the nation's health policy. The list clearly shows, for example, that the vast majority of health policies are but modifications of or amendments to previously enacted laws; incrementalism has indeed been a feature of the development of American health policy. The

list of policies in Appendix 4 also shows that health policy mirrors the determinants of health. There are policies that address the environments in which people live, their lifestyles, and their genetics, and there are policies related to the provision of and payment for health services. The remaining appendixes, referred to throughout the book, present excerpts from congressional testimony, examples of rules or proposed rules issued by implementing agencies, and reprints of illustrative letters, executive orders, and other documents that illustrate important aspects of the policymaking process. The intent is to enliven the text and to provide useful and illustrative examples.

Instructor's Resources

Instructor's resources that include answers to the chapter-end discussion questions, teaching slides, and a test bank are available to instructors who adopt this book. These resources can be obtained through the Health Administration Press website. For access information, please e-mail hap-books@ache.org.