

Introduction to Health Policy

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PREFACE

For decades, US policymakers have been struggling to find solutions to our healthcare challenges. Thus, healthcare reform is among the top priorities of almost every administration.

This introductory textbook on US health policy covers the related areas of health policymaking, critical health policy issues, health policy research, and an international perspective on health policy and policymaking.

The book offers the following features:

- ◆ Real-world cases to exemplify the theories and concepts presented from a variety of perspectives, including the hospital setting, public health, managed care, ambulatory care, and extended care
- ◆ Learning objectives and key points
- ◆ Discussion questions
- ◆ A glossary
- ◆ Boxes, including Learning Points, For Your Consideration, Key Legislation, and others, as well as exhibits to present background information on concepts, examples, and up-to-date information
- ◆ Instructor's materials, including PowerPoint slides and answers to the discussion questions that appear in each chapter.

ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

This book is organized in four parts: an introduction, an overview of health policymaking, a health policy issues section, and a discussion of health policy research and analysis. Chapter 1, the sole chapter in Part I, introduces key terms related to, and the determinants of, health and health policy. It lists the key stakeholders in health policymaking and presents important reasons for studying health policy. The chapter lays the foundation for the rest of the book.

Part II examines the policymaking process at the federal, state, and local levels; in the private sector; and in international settings. Chapter 2 focuses on the policymaking process at the federal level of the US government. Important activities within the three policymaking stages—policy formulation, policy implementation, and policy modification—are described. The key characteristics of health policymaking in the United States are analyzed, and the role of interest groups in making that policy is discussed.

The focus of Chapter 3 is the US policymaking process at the state and local levels and in the private sector, which includes the research community, foundations, and private industry. Examples of policy-related research by private research institutes and foundations are described. The impact of the private sector's services and products on health and policy is illustrated using the fast-food industry and cigarette companies as examples.

Chapter 4 discusses international health policymaking. The World Health Organization is presented as an example of an international agency involved in policymaking related to health and major health initiatives. Five countries—Canada, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Australia, and China—are highlighted to illustrate diverse policymaking processes in various geographic regions. The experiences of these countries show that different political systems and policymaking processes lead to different approaches to population health and healthcare delivery.

In Part III, we discuss the policy issues related to social, behavioral, and medical care health determinants; to people from diverse populations; and to international health. Chapter 5 describes how US healthcare is financed and delivered. Private and public health insurance programs are summarized, and the subsystems of healthcare delivery—managed care, the military system, care for vulnerable populations, the public health program, the long-term care system, and oral health delivery—are introduced. After summarizing the major characteristics of US healthcare delivery, the chapter provides examples of health policy issues related to financing (regulatory and market approaches) and delivery (healthcare workforce, certification and accreditation of healthcare organizations, antitrust regulations, access-to-care issues, and patient rights concerns).

Chapter 6 defines vulnerable populations and discusses the dominant healthcare policy issues related to those populations. People from diverse populations include racial or ethnic minorities, those with low income, the elderly, women and children, people with HIV/AIDS, the mentally ill, and the homeless. In each segment, the magnitude of

the problem is summarized and a detailed discussion of the policies and strategies meant to address the problem is presented.

In Chapter 7, dominant health policy issues in the international community are discussed, with examples given for select countries. The chapter begins by discussing issues shared by developed countries, such as modifying health systems to better serve aging and diverse populations while maintaining high-quality care at a low cost. It then discusses challenges faced by developing nations, such as creating and maintaining high-functioning health systems with limited resources and dealing with the burdens of morbidity and mortality associated with poverty. Several emerging issues are also illustrated that could affect global health in the future.

Part IV presents an overview of policy analysis, focusing on examples of commonly used quantitative and qualitative methods. Chapter 8 introduces health policy research (HPR) and highlights the discipline's defining characteristics, including applied, policy-relevant, ethical, multidisciplinary, scientific, and population-based studies. The HPR process is summarized, and the chapter concludes with a discussion of ways to communicate findings and the challenges in implementing those findings in practice.

In Chapter 9, we illustrate commonly used methods in health policy research. Quantitative methods include experimental research, survey research, evaluation research, and cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness analysis. Because evaluation research is closely tied to policy research, the process involved in this type of research is described in greater detail. Qualitative methods include participant observations, in-depth interviews, and case studies.

Chapter 10 provides an example that illustrates the key steps in health policy analysis: assessing the determinants of a health problem, identifying policy intervention to the problem, critically evaluating the policy intervention, and proposing next steps in addressing the problem.

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