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Spinoffs and the Mobility of U.S. Merchant Semiconductor Inventors.

Background: Microfinance is a generally accepted tool for improving the economic situation of the poor in developing countries. However, it has hardly been used to finance medical devices required by the disabled, although the incapability of these groups to buy wheelchairs and other equipment is a major source of poverty. Aim: This paper analyzes the need for microfinance as a tool for financing wheelchairs for patients suffering from a walking disability and oxygen concentrators for patients with chronic lung diseases. It is not in the scope of this study to present a comprehensive concept of implementing a microfinance instrument, but the paper intends to demonstrate that the disabled in Syria perceive a great need for such a financing tool. In addition, this paper wants to encourage microfinance institutions to go beyond their traditional field of business and start lending to the disabled so that they can buy the equipment necessary to live a productive life of higher quality. Methodology: Two groups of disabled patients in Syria were asked about their social and economic situation as well as their access to financing tools. The first sample consisted of patients suffering from a walking disability with major constraints concerning their mobility and who are in need of a wheelchair ($N = 100$). The second sample consisted of patients with chronic lung diseases ($N = 90$) and with a need of additional oxygen. All participants lived below the national poverty line. Results: Eighty-two percent of the interviewees suffering from a walking disability and 78% of the interviewees with chronic lung diseases were not health-insured. Although there was some knowledge of microfinance among the interviewees, they reported having limited or no access to such programs. Seventy-two percent of the patients with a walking disability and 68% of the patients with chronic lung diseases knew what microfinance is, but the portion of borrowers was 24% of the examined patients with a walking disability and 22% of the patients with chronic lung diseases. Ninety percent of the patients with a walking disability and 73% of the patients with a chronic lung disease are convinced that they could generate income if they could only buy a wheelchair or an oxygen concentrator. The majority, i.e., 89% of the patients with a walking disability and 95% of the patients with a chronic lung disease, believed that microfinance would be an ideal tool for them to finance these devices and that they or their family could pay