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Lab I - US Healthcare, Policy & Informatics

CS6440 Intro Health Informatics, 2020 Spring

**Section A - Burdens of Healthcare**

1. **What are some of the greatest challenges in U.S. Health Care today? Detail at least 5.**
   1. Prohibitively high cost. The U.S. spends more than double the average per capita, compared with other Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries [ref]. It has been reported that compared with other countries, below-average incomes people in the U.S. are more likely to not obtaining recommended treatment due to financial reasons [ref].
   2. No universal healthcare. The U.S. government does not provide health benefits to citizens or visitors. Other developed countries that provide universal healthcare, such as the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Japan, and Germany, have a negligible number of bankruptcies related to medical expenses [49]. It has also been noted that in the U.S., medical bills are the single largest cause of consumer bankruptcy [50].
   3. Waiting time is long. Typically, a patient will usually need to schedule an appointment to get medical care. One will need the referral of PCP, then wait for another period of time, to see specialist clinician for a more complicated problem [ref].
   4. Over-expanded administrative system. It has been reported that Duke University Hospital has 900 hospital beds and 1,300 billing clerks, surpassing the typical number of clerks in Canada by 50-100 times [ref]. The expend of the complex administrative system not only increased administrative cost, but also deteriorated the overall efficiency [ref].
   5. The fear to the threat of lawsuits. Due to the feat malpractice lawsuits, healthcare givers tend practice defensive medicine, that is, to expand their examination list. Researches have noticed that in the U.S., in sates that has a higher risk of malpractice lawsuits, health care providers tend to have a higher concern of lawsuits, and tend to suggest more examinations. This scenario in turn increased the healthcare cost, increased suffering to patient, and decreased the efficiency of the healthcare system [ref].
2. **What are some of the advantages of U.S. Health Care compared to the rest of the world?**
   1. High insurance coverage. Most people in the U.S. are covered by health insurance. As of 2014, 89.6 percent of the U.S. population had some type of health insurance. The insurance company provides financial buffering against high healthcare cost for individuals and families [ref].
   2. Plenty of funds for the research and development of new technologies and prescription drugs. In 2013, the U.S. spent $1,026 per capita on pharmaceuticals and other non-durable medical care, more than double the OECD average of $515 [13]. The amount collected by the healthcare system made the U.S. the country pays the most for medical research and development. In the year of 2012, the sum of U.S. medical research funding account for 50% share of medical research funding of all countries globally [ref].
3. **What accounts for the majority of healthcare costs? Why?**
   1. The cost of new technologies and prescription drugs. As we have discussed above, people in the U.S. spent double the amount for pharmaceuticals and other non-durable medical care compared with average per capita cost in OECD countries [13].
   2. The rise of chronic diseases, including obesity. Compared with other high-income nations, the U.S. has a higher rate of chronic illness and a lower overall life expectancy [[15]](https://dpeaflcio.org/programs-publications/issue-fact-sheets/the-u-%20s-health-care-system-an-international-perspective/" \l "_edn15)
   3. The high administrative costs. As we have discussed above, for example, Duke University Hospital has 900 hospital beds and 1,300 billing clerks, surpassing the typical number of clerks in Canada by 50-100 times [ref].
4. **In your own words, describe how laws, regulations and policies have impacted the US Healthcare system as we know it.**

Due the ideology of capitalism and freedom, free market has been adopted nearly in all economic areas, so is in healthcare, in the U.S. Compared with other countries, policies with more ‘socialism’ color, such as universal healthcare, state-owned clinic/hospital, and national bargaining with pharmacracy companies [ref]. While such ideology and associated policies promoted competition and improved the research and development funding in U.S. healthcare system, they also caused high financial pressure and other problems. In my opinion, compared with other industries, healthcare is more associated with basic human rights. Thus, ‘fair’ should be more pronounced compared with ‘freedom competition’.

**Section B - Chronic Illnesses**

1. What is the CDC? What purpose does it serve?
2. What are chronic illnesses and why are they important to know?
3. What are some examples of acute conditions? How are acute conditions different from chronic illnesses?
4. What are the differences between a PCP and Specialist?
5. Describe the value of a PCP.
6. How can information technology be used to help PCP's with care coordination?

**Section C - Learning Health Systems**

1. In your own words, describe the good, the bad, the ugly of the US Healthcare system. You are not limited to the articles provided, in fact we highly encourage you to do a bit of research to get a better understanding.
2. In your opinion, how are learning health systems impacting the US Healthcare system? Good or Bad.