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The universal health care system is a very important aspect of everyone’s lives, especially for countries with low and middle income economies. It is developing and become more accessible and economically attainable for everyone. Several problems with the system are that the laws are not being forced or educated about enough, which does not help in improving the system. The major one is the non-communicable diseases, they are the leading cause of death and keep growing, not to mention they are also very expensive to treat. This ties into the topic of access to medication and the pharmaceutical development. Without laws and prevention, the health system is no use which is why it is also important to be fair to the people especially between the genders because the costs between the two is different. Netherlands, being a small but densely populated country, has taken many measures and implemented laws in order to improve the health system which include reducing the grave threats of non-communicable diseases as well as focusing on improving the areas such as medication costs and demographics.

First, non-communicable diseases are the biggest problem facing the health system; these are defined as diseases which are not passed from person to person, in other words, they are not contagious. Theses diseases are divided up into five groups: cancers, cardiovascular diseases, chronic diseases, diabetes and mental disorders. Common activities related to the causes of NCDs are tobacco use, alcohol abuse, high blood pressure, little exercise and unhealthy diets. Some of Netherland’s major successes through their of prevention for NCDs are that the smoking population has reduced by half since 1990-2012. Also in 2013, population screening programs became available through state programs for cancers and vaccination programs. The most common  diseases in the Netherlands are mental disorders, followed by cardiovascular diseases and cancers. NCDs account for about 89% of deaths in the country, with the communicable, maternal, perinatal and nutritional conditions and injuries accounting for the other 11% of deaths. Another effort made was to reduce the amount of alcohol consumption in teenagers, this was done by raising the drinking age from 16 to 18 years of age. This will help with the early prevention of NCDs, because by raising the age the percentage of population affected by these contributing factors is reduced, therefore the amount of population that has a probability of dying, reduces. Lastly, a considerable factor that helps all groups of NCDs and increase the overall health of the country is the low trans-fats intake the population. Less than 1% of the population eat these fatty acids due to self-regulatory measurements in the country. These efforts are all very significant and help in various ways with the prevention of these diseases further developing, but in order to improve the health care system, the cost and accessibility to proper medication for these diseases is necessary.

Second, access to medications and pharmaceuticals is very important in the health system. However, this is hindered by major legal problem because of the patents and laws on medications. The good access to proper medication and economic availability of it is a major reason why the health care system needs to improve in order to benefit all the people. From 2000-2013, health expenditures increased 5.5%, which made it harder to reduce the number of NCDs because of the high costs, even though most of the population can afford it, it still is hard to improve the health system with these obstacles. The increase has slowed down due to the manufacturing of generic prescription drugs which lowers the costs, making them more accessible to a wider range of people. Due to the fact that Netherlands has some of the highest health expenditures in the EU, it makes it that much more important to improve the health care system so that it is available to all. The pharmaceutical industry has three main products that determine the cost of each, including:patented medicines, generic medicines and branded off medicines. Patented medicines are the biggest problem in this industry, that is because they have legal rights over the medicine that do not allow other companies to make the same product with the same purpose. In 1998 the “Dutch Ministry of Health together with the Dutch Society of General Practitioners (LHV), the Royal Dutch Society of Pharmacists (KNMP), and the Dutch Patient and Consumer Federation (NPCF) published a pamphlet entitled: The same medicine in a different coat. Drugs without a trademark, equally effective, but cheaper” this made generic drugs available to all people, meaning that they didn't have to pay as much as they would for patented drugs. By making people aware of cheaper alternatives, it can put pressure on patented medicines. Another area of the health system that is being improved is the affect the demographics of a person have on the cost of their health care.

The reform on the health care system in 2006, which got rid of private and public insurance, and replaced it with universal health insurance, has introduced competition in order to strive for a better health care system. This ties into the demographics of a person especially gender, it determines which system is better and more affordable for the people. Their gender based inequities in global health due to the fact that men are socially constructed to be more dominant than the female. Men are about 5% more prone to dying due to these non-communicable diseases than women are, and women have a longer life expectancy than them. Statistics from 2000 to 2012 show the large difference in death rates (per 100,000) between men and women with cardiovascular diseases, this NCD being on of the prominent ones in the Netherlands has an impact on the characteristics of an equal and fair health system. Over the years the rate has gone down for both genders, it went down from about 150 deaths per 100,000 to about 100 deaths for women. The decrease was more significant for men which changed from about 240 deaths per 100,000 in 2000, to about 140 deaths per 100,000 by 2012. Overall men have higher risk factors that lead to these NCDs, than women do. This includes tobacco smoking, where 29% of the male population smoke compared to 23% for women, and 14% of the male population, about less than half of that for women-6%, consuming alcohol. Although men have higher numbers in risk factors and NCDs, women still play a significant role in the health system because of the birth rate, which is approximately 1.72 per woman, which compared to other countries is better. Both genders play and have significant effects on the health system which is why it important to find the best solutions to solve its problems.

Netherlands, has improved it’s health care system by becoming one and working together in order to prevent non-communicable diseases, as well as make efforts to reduce the costs of medications and balance the costs and care between men and women. Although efforts and laws that deal with the lifestyle of the population have been the center of attention, in order to prevent before it happens non-communicable diseases being the leading cause of death, have caused much concern and need continued attention. The reduction of costs on medication necessary to fight of these diseases have been another approach to the problem. Lasty, the strive for equality between the demographics, mostly gender, in the health system has been another contribution to providing a better health care system for the country of Netherlands. Prevention and protection are the main ideas to focus on to improve the universal health system and fix these problems, not only for Netherlands, but also for the developing countries which that suffer the most.