

Critical Analysis of Cross-Cutting Themes in Healthcare Systems and Practices

Bader Saad F Alharby¹, Bayan khaled Alsuwaylimi², Faisal Mohammed Alzehairi³, Saad Mohammed Saad Al zuair⁴, Fahad Adnan Safar⁵, Bashayer Sameer Alenezi⁶, Tahani Awdah Alenazi⁷, Manal Halal Alanazi⁸, Hesham Mohammed Alhamad⁹, Meteab Mohammed Alsaeed¹⁰, Azeza Mohmmad Alonyzi¹¹

Abstract

Every healthcare system in the world experiences a variety of challenges as well as opportunities as they attempt to deliver healthcare services that are accessible, efficient, and, most importantly, equitable. This review presents general areas of interest in health systems and implementation sciences while appreciating trends, barriers, variations, and innovations influencing the systems and practices in producing improved patients' health status. It includes topics like access/travel to care, service quality, payment/reimbursement processes, human resources in the healthcare sector, and technology in/impact of healthcare. The recommendations in this paper are targeted at enhancing global healthcare practices through shared and integrated practices involving technology and considering health equity.

Keywords: *Healthcare Systems; Health Equity; Technology in Healthcare; Universal Health Coverage; Workforce Challenges; Healthcare Access.*

Introduction

Healthcare delivery systems are on the central front line of controlling health in any given community or society. Recent years have, therefore, significantly posed various pressures on global health, for example, through demographic changes, the emergence of new diseases, and the uneven distribution of facility and human resources. Subthemes that affect the provision of health care include access, quality, equity, and efficiency (Mohammad et al., 2024a; Mohammad et al., 2023a; Mohammad et al, 2024b). This analysis articulates and explores these themes' implications for healthcare practice and achievement in various care contexts, including high-income and LMIC countries.

In the last few years, digital tools in healthcare, the quest for universal health coverage, and the increasing employment of SDOH as strategic approaches toward enhancing health systems internationally have received attention. This paper discusses the extant literature and case evidence to examine these

¹ Alyamamah hospital, Saudi Arabia; beedro_11@hotmail.com.

² Ministry of Health, Saudi Arabia; Bayan_oo@yahoo.com.

³ Al-Yamamah hospital, Saudi Arabia; Faisalalmoh999@gmail.com.

⁴ ministry of health , Al-Dawadmi Dental center, Saudi Arabia; Dr.saad1990@outlook.com.

⁵ Eradah complex – MOH, Saudi Arabia; Dr-fhd-a-s@hotmail.com.

⁶ Almanar primary health care, Saudi Arabia; Bsh-bsh-022@hotmail.com.

⁷ King Saud University, Saudi Arabia; taalenazi@ksu.edu.sa.

⁸ Al Manar Health Center, Saudi Arabia; mano81177@gmail.com.

⁹ Alahsa Health Cluster Supply chain department - MOH, Saudi Arabia; alhamad.h.ma@gmail.com.

¹⁰ Ministry of Health, Saudi Arabia; Mmalsaeed@moh.gov.sa.

¹¹ Western Janadriyah, Saudi Arabia, alanazi20@moh.gov.sa

developments, the emergent issues they represent, and the potential solutions that might be found in various innovations.

Literature Review

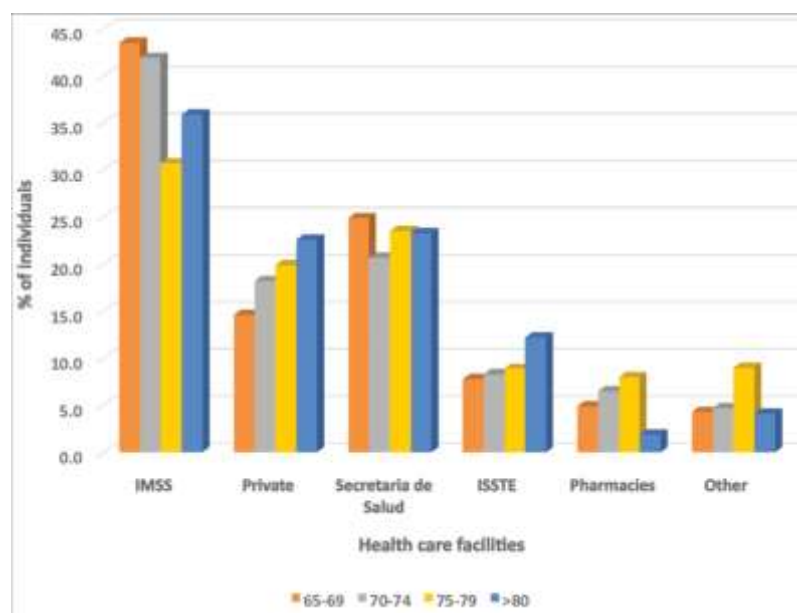
Describing the current state of knowledge concerning healthcare systems and practices, the present research identifies some key areas that provide the map for analyzing the main issues and concerns that matter most when considering the topic of healthcare. Some topics of interest include health insurance, health systems and technology, health workforce, funding for health, and digital health and innovation. All these areas have different implications for healthcare improvement, and detailed strategies for its enhancement from the perspective of HI and LMICs are proposed to make healthcare systems more effective and sustainable.

Access to Healthcare

The availability of healthcare services is among the most essential healthcare necessities, and it acts as the determinant of various health parameters and quality of life. This situation creates barriers to accessing health care, such as high costs for health care services, low levels of insurance, and culture or distance. These countries are pretty developed, and most possess adequate healthcare systems, but reaching out to the minority or the needy, such as the poor, rurally situated citizens, and those in the lower strata of society, is a problem. The high levels of expenditure on health, especially among the population with a private insurance base, mean that people practice cost-related postponing or omitting medical procedures (Mohammad et al., 2023b; Al-Hawary et al., 2020; Al-Husban et al., 2023).

Inadequate structures, skilled human power, and meager financial reserves also constrain healthcare facilities in LMICs. Hospitals and clinics within most LMICs are congested, inadequately financed, and inefficient in providing corresponding services. In rural and remote areas, these problems are magnified by poor accessibility to means of transport, inadequate stock of medical equipment, and the absence of specialized healthcare units. It is worsened by the fact that the availability of skilled human capital in the health sector, especially in the LMICs, poses a major challenge since much of the health workforce is skewed towards the urban areas while the rural population remains unattended/underserved.

ACA includes policies that seek to enhance insurance, enhance healthcare infrastructure, and train more health personnel focusing on needy areas. Donor support and foreign collaborations also significantly contribute to increasing the availability of health care services, especially in these poor resource countries; however, these must be maintained in the long run.



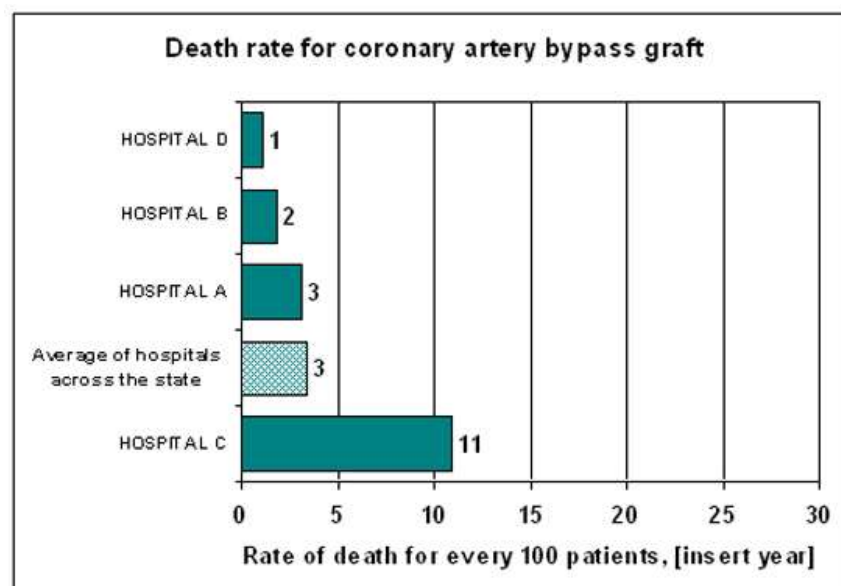
Graph of health care facilities utilised by respondents,

Healthcare Quality

Healthcare quality is one of the key framework fields of a healthcare system and plays a pivotal role in the quality of the outcomes achieved. WHO has defined healthcare quality as the extent to which healthcare services facilitate improvement in the probability of acquiring desired health outcomes, and it is aligned with the best knowledge available now. Health services in HICs are mainly general and always available via equipped medical technologies, experienced human capital in the health sector, and sound policies. However, inequality has also been detected in these systems, resulting in better health care for one group and relatively worse health care for another.

The general health care in LMICs is significantly substandard due to poor infrastructure, human resources, and micro- and macro-resources. In many LMICs, healthcare facilities are aging and inadequately resourced, and there is frequently insufficient specialized care; hence, healthcare workers do not function at their best. In addition, the standard of the health sector depends on the standards of necessary medicines, diagnostics, and equipment, as well as the technologies utilized. For instance, rural health centers may be unable to afford simple diagnostic tools that let the professional diagnose the patients accurately; on the other hand, patients may not be able to afford essential life-saving drugs.

To this end, IOs and governments interested in enhancing healthcare quality in LMICs pursued infrastructural development of the healthcare system, expanded financial support of healthcare professionals' training, and enhanced access to necessary medicines and gifts. The last measures involve enhancing health system governance and leadership to promote compliance with quality assurance efforts and resource utilization.



(Doherty & Crowley, 2016)

Workforce Management

Another challenge currently felt in the healthcare delivery system worldwide is the shortage of healthcare human resources in LMICs and even in HICs. Although high-income countries are endowed with an adequate oversupply of healthcare human resources, they may still experience a shortage of human resources in one way or another, ranging from burnout, aging human resources, and high turnover. Also, the pressure on developing countries to expand the availability of healthcare access and treatment

contributes to healthcare work overload due to the increasing need for services, growing populations with existing diseases, and aging populations, all of which impose higher demands on the healthcare workforce.

Consequently, LMICs face severe workforce deficits due to inadequate financial resources for training and education, brain drain, and the steadily growing demand for healthcare services in workforce-deficient countries without the corresponding increase in healthcare personnel. Rural, refereed, and distant regions are specifically influenced since the healthcare staff is not ready to practice at those places because of the poor infrastructural and professional development and remunerational facilities.

Comprehensive management measures for addressing these problems include enhancing workplace conditions, raising remunerations and other benefits for healthcare staff, and creating effective methods for reducing staff turnover. Furthermore, there is a need to enhance health workers' training and education to enhance health service delivery, especially in hard-to-reach areas. PROFESSIONAL: Another workforce solution that has been highlighted is to increase the utilization of mid-level practitioners, like nurse practitioners and physician assistants.

Financing Healthcare

Accessibility, quality, and affordability of healthcare remain major problems in almost all existing healthcare systems, with a special focus on healthcare sustainability that is reaching its optimum in both HICs and LMICs. Higher-income countries have experienced dramatic healthcare expenditures mainly because of the aging population, increasing incidence of lifestyle diseases, and medical equipment and technology advancements. They are all still trying to find a way to cater to the mandatory percentages for the public and private funds, not to mention the responsibility to set an acceptable level of how much they can spend on healthcare (Doherty & Crowley, 2016; Al-Nawafah et al., 2022; Alolayyan et al., 2018). The cost of healthcare services, including hospital and physician services, pharmaceuticals, and other services, remains a barrier for the patient, especially in countries employing private insurance systems.

Financial problems are even more daunting in LMICs. These countries usually provide less money for health care, hence having diluted health systems to satisfy the people's health needs. Related to this, one of the largest economically feasible costs experienced by people in LMICs is direct payments to healthcare service providers. Depending on donor funding for health care programs in these countries can also lead to dependency and instability.

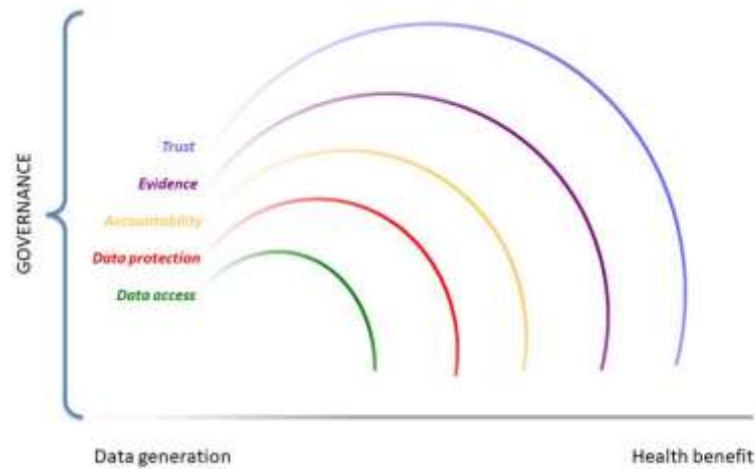
Strategies to solve these problems include utilizing the approaches associated with promoting Universal Health Coverage (UHC), the main goal of which is to provide people with the necessary healthcare services without spending significant money for that purpose. Systems that have been set to embrace UHC include countries from Scandinavia and some Asian nations, and there has been a general improvement in health statuses and pro-equity scenarios as far as health moderation is concerned. Nevertheless, achieving results envisaged by the concept of UHC calls for enormous investment in healthcare provision and the development of sustainable financing strategies that public and private stakeholders can support.

Digital Health and Innovation

EHRs, telemedicine, mHealth, and AI are innovations that significantly affect healthcare delivery in developed and LMICs. These technologies can increase healthcare availability, lower costs, engage patients, and bring about abstract precision in diagnosis. For example, telemedicine has become an essential business intervention in rural and distant hospitals since transport is scarce, and patients can get medical advice without physically meeting the healthcare professional. Likewise, with AI, machine learning algorithms improve diagnostic tools, treatment, and patient outcomes.

Nevertheless, access to information technologies is unequal, and gaps based on the digital divide hinder the adoption of these technologies, especially among LMICs. The following challenges may affect the effectiveness of using digital health tools in these regions: poor connectivity and access to reliable internet, lack of good technology infrastructure, and high cost of technology. Also, the issue of data privacy and

sharing assurance continues to be a significant barrier, especially as digital health technologies advance into the future and deepen their ties with healthcare industries.



(Doherty & Crowley, 2016)

To meet the challenges above, digital health development strategies are needed to support infrastructure and strategies to create effective policies and frameworks for promoting information and communication technologies for sustaining healthcare. This paper argues that successful digital health innovations will require cross-country and multi-sectoral efforts to supply the technology, people, and funding needed to drive innovation and adoption in high-income and LMICs.

Methods

It is an exploratory study employing survey and interview data from global health reports, peer-reviewed articles, case studies, and policy papers. Therefore, empirical evidence was accessed through a systematic review of the literature to inform key themes centered on health systems and emerging trends that encroach on and cut across healthcare systems. Moreover, information about healthcare supply, including availability and quality, staffing, and financing sources and forms, was compared, and conclusions were drawn about solutions and success.

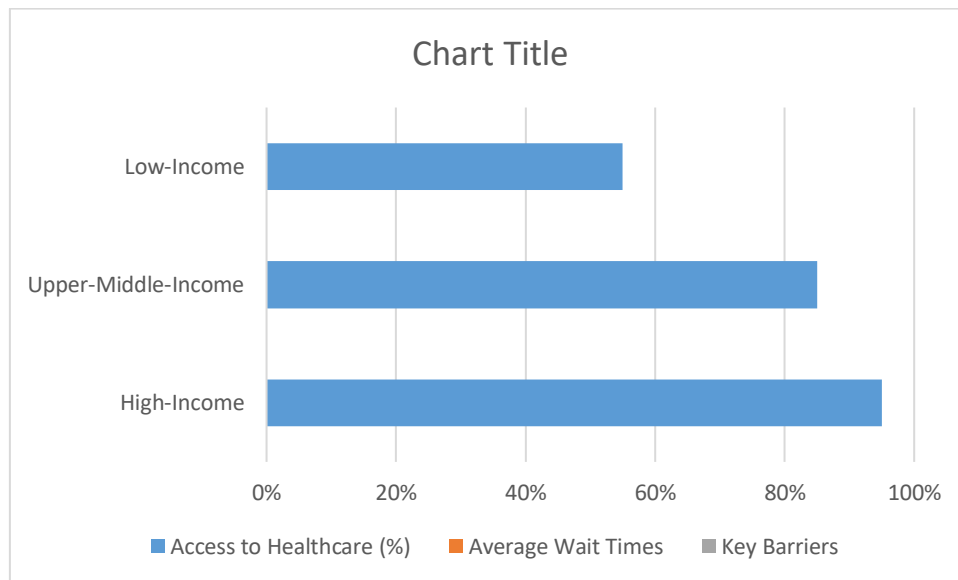
Results and Findings

Indeed, based on the current literature review of various healthcare systems in various world regions, gaps in access to healthcare, service quality, and health outcomes are evidenced. This inadequacy is due to economic factors such as scarcity, health infrastructure and supply of human health care workers, and differences in health policies at the regional level. In this part, important indicators relating to healthcare availability and quality shall be discussed, and such information shall be presented in tables and figures for high-income, upper-middle-income, and low-income countries

Figure 1: Global Healthcare Access by Region

Region	Access to Healthcare (%)	Average Wait Times	Key Barriers
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High-Income	95%	5-10 days	Cost, insurance coverage
Upper-Middle-Income	85%	10-30 days	Geographic barriers, cost
Low-Income	55%	30+ days	Infrastructure, workforce



(Doherty & Crowley, 2016)

Analysis:

In Figure 1, we can understand, to a great extent, the inequality in accessibility to health care by regions. Among the various types of classes, a high-income group has the highest level of access, with 95 percent of the population getting health care services. Health systems have made this possible with adequate healthcare facilities, government-sponsored or compulsory health insurance availability, and relatively fair distribution of health human resources. Although the healthcare sector has been revitalized in high-income countries, access barriers such as the cost of quality healthcare and insurance persist and affect poorer populations. Patient traffic and the often cumbersome nature of insurance may result in service delays of up to five to ten days for outpatient services.

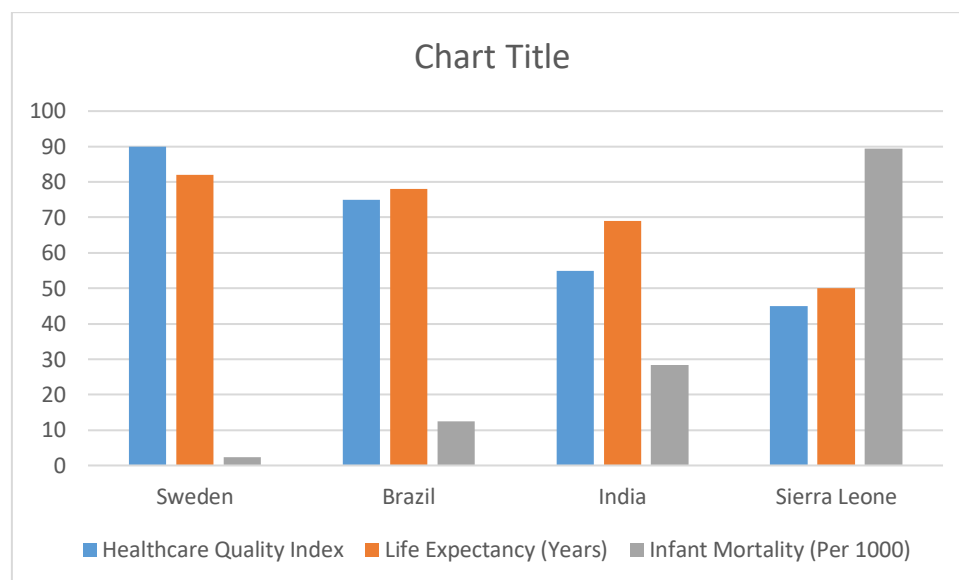
So, about the upper middle-income category, access to health care is still relatively high, but the barriers are more defined. Overall, three-quarters of the population have access to healthcare in Macedonia, with average waiting times for treatment between 10 and 30 days. Even in relatively well-developed healthcare systems, there are often physiographic constraints, especially in rural or distant locations. Also, regarding the cost of care, the study reveals that accessing care in upper-middle-income countries is still expensive since out-of-pocket payments after insurance coverage are usually not fully met.

On the other hand, low-income countries (LMICs) have a myriad of challenges when it comes to providing adequate healthcare access. Informal estimates note that, on average, only 55% of the population in these countries has access to healthcare, and the waiting lists in these countries can take more than 30 days (Greenhalgh & Papoutsis, 2018; Alzyoud et al., 2024; Mohammad et al., 2022; Rahamneh et al., 2023). These gaps included inadequate endowment with adequate health facilities, a scarcity of human health

resources, and financial constraints. The worst hit are the rural and remote populations, more so because the barriers include geographical and economic challenges

Figure 2: Health Outcomes and Quality of Care Correlation

Country	Healthcare Quality Index	Life Expectancy (Years)	Infant Mortality (Per 1000)
Sweden	90	82	2.3
Brazil	75	78	12.5
India	55	69	28.3
Sierra Leone	45	50	89.5



(Greenhalgh & Papoutsi, 2018)

Analysis:

In the context of the used indicators, healthcare quality and comparison of life expectancy and IMR are shown in Figure 2. High-income countries like Sweden have slightly better healthcare quality and a healthcare quality index equal to 90. This is coupled with a life expectancy of 82 years for every person and a low infant mortality rate of 2.3 per thousand births (Frenk & Moon, 2015; Al-Azzam et al., 2023; Al-Shormana et al., 2022; Al-E'wesat et al., 2024). The Swedes have better healthcare contact through comprehensive and quality medical services, affordable accessibility, and strong feelings for public healthcare programs and services (Greenhalgh & Papoutsi, 2018).

Brazil is a little worse regarding healthcare quality; the quality index is 75, and this is a middle-income country. This is equivalent to a life expectancy of 78 years, with a higher infant mortality of 12.5 deaths per 1000 live births. Although Brazil has achieved progress in increasing healthcare access for most citizens, obstacles to access, quality, and regional distribution remain grave. Brazil's public and private healthcare services are not equally distributed throughout the country, making health indicators worse than those of rich nations.

India is another LMIC that has a healthcare quality index of 55 and, therefore, still has large health disparities. Therefore, it is relatively shorter (69 years), and IMR is also much higher at 28.3 per 1000 live births. The problems hindering the improvement of healthcare quality in India include:

- A lack of sufficient resources to meet clients' needs.
- An inadequate number of health facilities in the country.
- Inequality in appealing health centers' demand between the urban and rural sectors.

While the Indian government has taken various steps towards enhancing people's access to health care facilities, such as the National Health Mission, even today, there are lingering constraints with workforce deficiency and scarcity of funds.

Sierra Leone, which ranks among the poorest nations globally, has a health quality index of 45, the lowest of all the countries mentioned above. This goes hand in hand with a total life expectancy of 50 years and 89.5 deaths per 1000 children below 5 years of age (Frenk & Moon, 2015). The existing Sierra Leone healthcare system has big challenges in terms of infrastructure, the number of trained healthcare providers, and overall stockpiles of drugs and equipment. However, civil conflict within the country and the 2014-2016 Ebola outbreak have derailed healthcare advancement. Despite foreign support and attempts to restore the whole aspect of a healthcare system, there are still numerous restrictions on providing fundamental healthcare that directly reflect the state's adverse health indicators.

Discussion

Access and Healthcare Equity

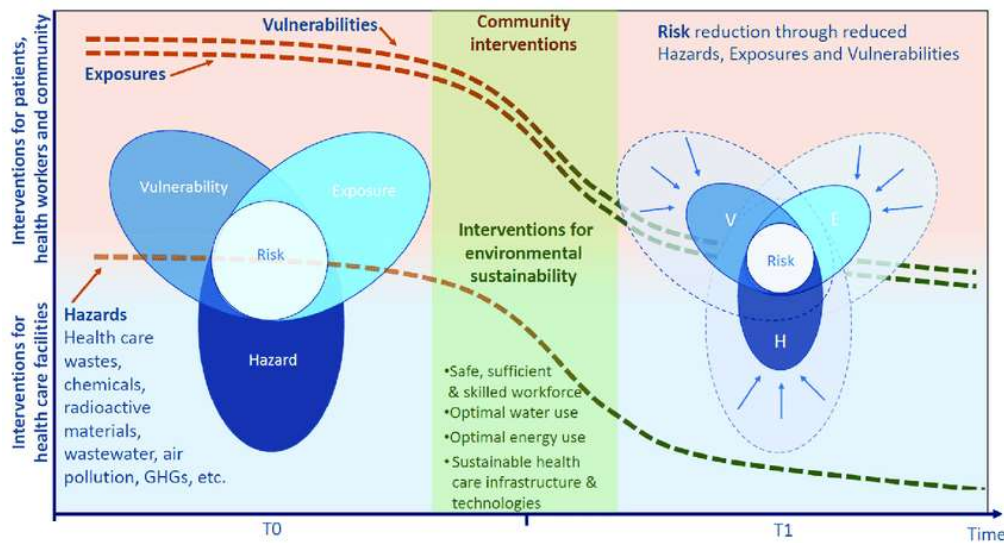
A major implication of this study is the variation in health status and utilization between developed countries and LMICs. Health systems are more developed in high-income countries, but problems related to insurance, the cost of health care, and limited access due to waiting lists still exist. In LMICs, the problem is compounded by issues of scarcity of resources, inadequate health facilities, and human resource shortage. Therefore, enhancing access to healthcare in the LMICs means more than just putting money into healthcare; it means putting social policies such as education, nutrition, and sanitation into place.

Workforce Management

A challenge to the workforce exists in both the high-income and the LMICs. He also stated that high-income countries can sometimes offer far superior wages and compensation given that the demand for and workload on healthcare professionals is growing; many of these individuals suffer burnout. In LMICs, the policy on training and support of healthcare workers is weak, resulting in high turnover rates and poor patient health status (Chassin & Loeb, 2017). Recommendations for enhancing the health workforce are increasing health professional education and training, enhancing employment conditions, and developing strategies for keeping qualified health workers in rural settings.

Healthcare Financing and Sustainability

It has become a global concern to come up with sustainable health financing. In developed countries, health expenditure increases are crucial; many countries are finding it difficult to sustain health coverage for their citizens. For LMICs, funding constraints are associated with scarce resources and relatively limited domestic investment; donors remain a major funding source. UHC is another strategy that may solve these problems; this concept aims to bring all citizens the necessary and appropriate healthcare services they desire without struggling to pay for them.



(Berwick & Fox, 2016)

Digital Health Innovations

Digital health technologies are increasingly being adopted to deliver healthcare services, especially in hard-to-reach regions. Telemedicine, EHRs, and artificial intelligence systems appear to increase the reliability of diagnoses, engage patients, and save money. However, adopting these technologies in developing Latin America and other LMICs is still challenging due to the digital divide experienced between high-income countries and LMICs. This research calls for appropriate investments in digital infrastructure, human capital development, and inclusive technology procurement policies that will help reduce the digital divide.

Conclusions

IFMS encourages models of payment, integrated technology, and staffing and workforce planning. Globally, health systems are under pressure, but opportunities for change abound. Issues like health service utilization, quality of the services, health care financing, and adoption of e-health are essential aspects of enhancing global health care. Variations persist between HICs and LMICs, including access, quality, and cost-effectiveness or finance. Such problems and challenges call for a health facility investment, fair revenue mobilization, and application of technology with the right mix of human resources.

Recommendations

1. Expand Universal Health Coverage (UHC): Governments are responsible for implementing the right policy to guarantee an equal supply of basic health care services for every citizen.
2. Invest in Digital Health Infrastructure: Governments and private organizations must urgently embrace and procure digital health tools and promote equal implementation across systems.
3. Strengthen Healthcare Workforce Development: The pop-up of more education and training centers for practitioners, including those in developing regions, will increase human resources.
4. Improve Healthcare Financing Models: Healthcare financing has to be sustainable and reasonable. This will require reforms in insurance and increased domestic investment in healthcare projects.

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