The Paradox of Universal Health Coverage

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Global push for universal health coverage

“It is a powerful equalizer that abolishes distinctions between the rich and the poor, the privileged and the marginalized, the young and the old, ethnic groups, and women and men...It is the ultimate expression of fairness.”

Margaret Chan, 65th World Health Assembly (2012)
Goal of universal health coverage

To ensure that all people obtain the health services they need without suffering financial hardship when paying for them. This requires:

- a strong, efficient, well-run health system;
- a system for financing health services;
- access to essential medicines and technologies;
- a sufficient capacity of well-trained, motivated health workers.

WHAT COULD GO WRONG?
Health Care Spending as a % of GDP
Some Very Real Benefits

Kidney Transplants

Knee Replacements

MRIs
Some Very Enduring Challenges

Out of 34 OECD Countries

25th in maternal mortality
26th in life expectancy
28th in low birth weight
This issue is not only about people who are poor.
Health = Health Care
What determines health?

SOCIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL, and BEHAVIORAL FACTORS (60%)

GENETICS (20%)

HEALTH CARE (20%)
Spending on social services, employment programs, supportive housing and rent subsidies, nutritional support and family assistance, and other social services that exclude health benefits.
Health Care Spending as a % of GDP

- United States
- Netherlands
- Sweden
- France
- Germany
- Canada
- Denmark
- Austria
- Switzerland
- Portugal
- Finland
- Belgium
- New Zealand
- Greece
- OECD
- Ireland
- United Kingdom
- Spain
- Norway
- Iceland
- Slovenia
- Japan
- Australia
- Italy
- Slovak Republic
- Hungary
- Czech Republic
- Luxembourg
- Chile
- Israel
- Poland
- Korea
- Estonia
- Mexico
Total Investment in Health as a % GDP

*Switzerland and Turkey are missing data for 2009*
Ratio of Social-to-Health Spending

*Switzerland and Turkey are missing data for 2009
In OECD, for $1 spent on health care, about $2 is spent on social services.

In the US, for $1 spent on health care, about $0.90 is spent on social services.
Countries with higher ratios of social-to-health spending have statistically better health outcomes.

- Lower infant mortality
- Fewer low birth weight babies
- Less premature death
- Longer life expectancy

Bradley, Elkins, Herrin, Elbel et al., BMJ Open, 2011
Determinants

- GENETICS (20%)
- SOCIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL, and BEHAVIORAL FACTORS (60%)
- HEALTH CARE (20%)

Investment

- SOCIAL SERVICE SPENDING (35%)
- HEALTH CARE SPENDING (65%)

MISMATCH
Universal Health Coverage

“Also requires recognition of the critical role played by all sectors in assuring human health, including transport, education and urban planning”

- World Health Organization

Housing
Employment
Nutrition
Safety
Etc., etc...
Health Systems

REGULATION

FINANCING
PAYING

PROVIDING

INDIVIDUALS
COMMUNITIES
Thank You

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