

# Comparison and analysis of healthcare systems



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## **Abstract**

Health care plans are important components of health care systems of every country. A health care plan essentially facilitates the provision of health care to people living within a country or jurisdiction. There are millions of people who do not have access to health care across the world. This problem faces many countries including the United States where 15% of residents do not have access to health care insurance. The lack of access to health care by the population may be attributed to weaknesses in healthcare plans in different countries. It is therefore important to assess the weaknesses and strengths of different healthcare plans across the globe with a view to embracing the strengths of different healthcare plans and eliminating the weaknesses in these plans. The paper will evaluate healthcare plans in United States of America, Russia, Algeria and Bangladesh. These countries were chosen since they represent diversity as they are located in different continents, that is, North America, Europe, Africa and Asia respectively. The findings will reveal that developed countries such as Russia and the United States face challenges such as inaccessibility to healthcare insurance by citizens while developing countries such as Bangladesh and Algeria, the major challenges are inadequate funding for healthcare and lack of healthcare infrastructure and personnel to meet the healthcare needs of the population. The paper recommends that governments across the world allocate higher investment in healthcare infrastructure and personnel, collaborate with private sector to ensure different population segments have access to healthcare services at affordable costs and investment in preventive medicine to ensure that people do not succumb to avoidable

illnesses. Finally, countries should explore alternative medicine including traditional medicine to ensure a larger proportion of people have access to healthcare services and invest in new technology and techniques in medicine including telemedicine to ensure people have access to healthcare services irrespective of location barriers.

## **Introduction**

Healthcare is an important need which every human being requires to survive. Healthcare systems are equally important for all states since they meet healthcare needs of different population segments. Countries with healthy workers are more likely to achieve higher growth and development levels. An effective healthcare plan should provide for different aspects of healthcare including health care providers, healthcare funding, healthcare service provision and healthcare personnel among other aspects. Different countries have different healthcare plans with various weaknesses and strengths. However, many healthcare plans face challenges in funding and this is the reason many people do not have access to healthcare insurance or services globally. In order to ensure that each country has an effective healthcare plan, it is important to analyze different strategies which have been implemented by countries in different continents. As previously stated, this paper will analyze the healthcare systems present in the United States of America, Russia, Algeria and Bangladesh. The strengths of healthcare plans in Russia, Algeria and Bangladesh will be replicated to the United States' plan in order to improve its efficiency.

The United States health care plan is one of the best in the world. In this plan, healthcare is provided by collaboration between the government and

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private sector although the latter provides greater healthcare cover to ensure healthcare services are accessible by all. The government provides healthcare services through programs which include Medicaid, Medicare, Veteran's Health Administration and the Children's Health Insurance Programs (Christensen & Jason, 2009). It offers efficient healthcare services to the majority of the population although one major weakness is that it is inaccessible by over 15% of the population due to lack of health care insurance. Healthcare in Russia on the other hand is also advanced and the country boasts of more healthcare workers, hospitals and physicians per capita than all countries in the world. The country relies on a modern Vision 2020 Health Plan which aims at increasing life expectancy and reducing the high mortality rate. It aims at increasing life expectancy to 75 years and reducing heart attacks and strokes, a major cause of Russian mortalities, by 20%.

Healthcare provision in Algeria is not comparable with developed countries. There are few hospital beds, physicians and poor access to sanitation and water, all of which undermine healthcare provision. Although the healthcare policy focuses on prevention of disease, poor sanitation and lack of access to water causes measles, hepatitis, tuberculosis, cholera, typhoid fever and dysentery. Healthcare in Bangladesh is also relatively poor with more than 60% of the population lacking access to modern healthcare services. Its huge population of over 100 million people serves to exhaust the limited health resources present with projections expecting it to increase to over 200 million by 2035. Although Algeria and Bangladesh have poor healthcare service plans, there may be positive attributes which may be adopted by the

US healthcare plan. Further analysis into these healthcare plans will reveal whether the United States should borrow any effective healthcare plans from Russia, Algeria and Bangladesh. This analysis will be undertaken below;

## **Analysis of health care plan for selected countries**

### **United States healthcare plan**

The United States healthcare plan is one of the most efficient in the world. As previously stated, most of the healthcare service provision is undertaken by the private sector although the government offers healthcare through programs such as Medicaid, Medicare, Veteran's Health Administration and the Children's Health Insurance Programs. The US spends more funds on healthcare per person compared to the rest of the UN states apart from East Timor. However, despite the investment in healthcare, approximately 35% of people are underinsured and 15% are uninsured. Although more funds are spent on healthcare compared to many other states, there are complaints that the healthcare services provided are not commensurate to the money paid. The US faces low life expectancy at 42 and high infant mortality rate compared to many developed nations. Usually, healthcare is paid for using health insurance through various programs including government programs, individual program, employer's program or spousal benefits from employers. Non-profit organizations sometimes cater for charity cases for those who cannot afford insurance. Emergency care is however provided to all irrespective of whether they can afford treatment or not.

### **Strengths and weaknesses**

There are several strengths and weaknesses of the US healthcare plan.

Strengths include accessibility to modern technology and a large number of  
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physicians to cater for healthcare needs of patients. The US healthcare plan also ensures all people have access to emergency care irrespective of whether they can afford it or not, which ensures lives are saved in cases of emergencies. The fact that the private sector and government collaborate to provide healthcare ensures that a larger number of people are covered and have access to healthcare services. Finally, the large expenditure by government on healthcare ensures that better healthcare services are provided to all. However, there are certain weaknesses in the healthcare plan and the first is the inaccessibility of health insurance by many. Over 15% of people in the US do not have access to healthcare insurance and 35% of people are underinsured (Mahar, 2006). This is a weakness since a large number of people cannot access healthcare as a result. There are also weaknesses in quality of healthcare provided with complaints that the services received for healthcare are not commensurate to payments made. Finally, the low life expectancy at 42, and high infant mortality rate compared to many developed nations, reveals weaknesses in healthcare service provision.

## **Russia health care plan**

As discussed in the introduction, Russia boasts of more healthcare workers, hospitals and physicians per capita than all countries in the world.

Healthcare in Russia is also funded through partnership between the private sector and government. Healthcare is paid through healthcare insurance and there are over 300 insurers who operate currently in the healthcare system.

However, it faces challenges in high mortality rates and low life expectancy.

As a result, the government developed a Vision 2020 Plan which aims at

increasing the life expectancy and reducing the mortality rate (Field, 2001). There is optimism that the plan will work especially with the involvement of the public in developing this healthcare plan. The new healthcare plan also aims at promoting healthy lifestyles, improving paramedic services for accident victims, developing Russian medicines, improving blood service, improving early cancer detection and increasing access to medical technology by the population. The government is also encouraging more women to conceive through increased child support benefits and incentives to women who have more than two children.

### **Strengths and weaknesses**

There are several weaknesses and strengths which are associated with Russia's healthcare plan. Strengths include the Vision 2020 Plan which aims at increasing the life expectancy and reducing the mortality rate, which will improve the quality of life of population. This healthcare plan will address various healthcare issues including development of medicines, early cancer detection, medical technology accessibility, increased child births and blood service among others. Another strength of Russia's healthcare plan is the large number of hospitals and physicians available to patients, with Russia boasting of more healthcare workers, hospitals and physicians per capita than all countries in the world. Weaknesses include the high mortality rates and low life expectancy. These are attributable to drug abuse, high suicide rates and increased cardiovascular illnesses. Poor service provision is also another challenge and this is traced to a decrease in funding to healthcare provision after the 1980s.

## **Algeria's health care plan**

As earlier stated, healthcare provision in Algeria is not comparable with developed countries, with few hospital beds, physicians and poor access to sanitation and water, all of which undermine healthcare provision.

Healthcare primarily focuses on prevention of disease as opposed to treatment due to the low age of the average population. The healthcare in Algeria also focuses on providing free healthcare to poor people who cannot afford healthcare services. The private sector and government provide healthcare to the people although the larger proportion of care is provided by the government. Since the 1980s, average investment in healthcare by the government has increased by over 20% which has improved quality of care (Oxford Business Group, 2008). There are a few foreigners who practice medicine in Algeria and these are from Russia, France, Vietnam and Eastern Europe. The government requires doctors to work in public hospitals for at least five years before commencing service to private hospitals. However, the average quality of care compared to developed nations is low due to problems facing the country including poor sanitation and lack of access to water which leads to measles, hepatitis, tuberculosis, cholera, typhoid fever and dysentery. There is also limited access to healthcare services by the population due to a limitation in hospitals and healthcare personnel present.

## **Strengths and weaknesses**

There are various strengths and weaknesses which are associated with healthcare provision in Algeria. Strengths include the fact that the government finances treatment for poor people who cannot afford healthcare services which ensures that the poor have access to healthcare.



The average investment in healthcare by the government since 1980s has increased by over 20% which has improved quality of care and this is another benefit. Algeria's healthcare plan primarily focuses on prevention of disease as opposed to treatment and this is one of the most effective strategies applied to any healthcare plan. Finally, the government requirement that doctors work in public hospitals for at least five years before commencing service to private hospitals ensures that few doctors immigrate to foreign countries or private hospitals before offering service to public hospitals where the larger proportion of the poor seek healthcare service. Weaknesses in the healthcare plan in Algeria includes poor sanitation and lack of access to water which faces the country, which leads to measles, hepatitis, tuberculosis, cholera, typhoid fever and dysentery. These diseases are all deadly and have contributed to the high mortality rates in Algeria. Another weakness is the low average quality of care provided for citizens, in comparison to care provided for by developed countries. This requires more government investment in healthcare and external support from international partners. Finally, the few hospitals, healthcare physicians and limitation of healthcare technology is another weakness which is present in the Algerian healthcare plan.

### **Bangladesh healthcare plan**

Healthcare provision in Bangladesh is also relatively poor with more than 60% of the population lacking access to modern healthcare services. There is a shortage in physicians, hospitals and technology for use in healthcare. The large population of over 100 million also strains the few medical infrastructures available. However, the government has increased

investment in healthcare over the years and significant gains are beginning to be realized. For instance, vaccine coverage in the country is one of the highest in the world, with 90% of children being vaccinated against a host of diseases. Public hospitals are mainly used for preventive and inpatient care while private ones are mostly used for outpatient care. A blend of traditional and modern medicine is used to cure a variety of diseases in Bangladesh. However, the private sector is mostly unregulated with people selling drugs and providing treatment having no professional background in medicine. This sometimes causes major health complications to patients. Healthcare is provided at different levels ranging from hospital care to home visits. Bangladesh however has a problem of inadequate healthcare physicians and hospitals to cater for healthcare needs for its large population.

### **Strengths and weaknesses**

There are different weaknesses and strengths which are associated with the Bangladesh healthcare plan. The first strength is the large coverage of vaccine treatment which prevents many diseases amongst children. The second strength of this healthcare plan is the use of both traditional and modern medicine which addresses a host of illnesses. This medicine is provided at different levels including the hospital levels and family levels to ensure different population segments have access to different healthcare services. The increase in government investment in healthcare is another strength which strives to improve quality of healthcare accessed by the population. However, there are various weaknesses which are associated with healthcare provision in Bangladesh. The first is the limited healthcare infrastructure available which cannot cater for the large population. There

are limited healthcare physicians and hospitals which limit the number of people with access to healthcare services. More than half the population cannot access healthcare services. Another weakness is poor regulation of people offering traditional medicine. As discussed, many people selling drugs and providing traditional treatment have no professional background in medicine. This threatens the lives of patients who seek healthcare services from them.

## **Comparison of countries' health care plan with US health care plan and aspects which should be borrowed by the United States**

The various healthcare plans for the United States, Bangladesh, Russia and Algeria have been discussed in detail in the paper. Each healthcare plan has different weaknesses and strengths. The United States has a relatively efficient plan although many residents do not have access to insurance. Russia has many healthcare physicians and hospitals although the mortality rate is high and life expectancy high due to preventable diseases. Algeria has an effective healthcare policy which focuses on preventative care although low investment in healthcare and poor water and sanitation facilities has undermined the success of the healthcare plan. Bangladesh has a broad traditional and modern medicine approach at different levels although high population growth rates and poor regulation of traditional medicine has undermined the system. There are various aspects of these health care systems which should be embraced by the United States in order to improve healthcare service provision. This will be discussed in this section of the paper and it will be done on a country by country basis.

The United States may replicate Russia's system where a broad vision is developed with realistic targets which are meant to improve service provision. This vision should aim at reducing the number of people without access to healthcare insurance and reducing healthcare costs to the average citizen. This system should be developed in consultation with citizens as Russia did to ensure its overall success. The United States should also borrow various aspects from the Bangladesh system. It should offer medical care at different levels and consider investing in home visits for patients who cannot access healthcare services. The United States should also consider alternative forms of medical care including traditional medicine since it is proven to cure some conditions and illnesses just as effectively as modern medicines (Starr, 2001). Finally, the United States should replicate some effective strategies from the Algerian healthcare system including investing in preventive care, which is one of the most effective strategies in tackling modern illnesses and conditions. The government should also consider paying healthcare costs for the poor as it currently practiced in Algeria, which will ensure that more people have access to high quality healthcare services.

### **Summary and conclusion**

The paper has analyzed the healthcare systems and plans for four countries including the United States, Russia, Bangladesh and Algeria. These healthcare plans have been seen to have different weaknesses and strengths which have been discussed in the paper. Developed countries including the United States and Russia have been seen to have different challenges in healthcare compared to developing countries such as Algeria and

Bangladesh. Although Russia and the US have access to higher funding and investment in healthcare, they still have a significant portion of their population without access to healthcare insurance. Algeria and Bangladesh face challenges in funding and improving the quantity and quality of healthcare infrastructure including hospitals and number of physicians. It is the responsibility of governments across the world to ensure that citizens have access to high quality healthcare services. This can be achieved by higher investment in healthcare infrastructure and personnel as well as adopting successful practices in different nations. Developed nations should help fund healthcare in developing nations which face challenges in funding. Governments should also collaborate with private sector to ensure different population segments have access to healthcare services at affordable costs. Investment in preventive medicine will ensure that people do not succumb to avoidable illnesses. Alternative medicine including traditional medicine should also be explored since this will ensure a larger proportion of people have access to healthcare services. Finally, countries should explore new technology and techniques in medicine including telemedicine to ensure people have access to healthcare services irrespective of location barriers. This will ensure that all countries enjoy higher life expectancy levels and lower mortality levels.