

Comparison and analysis of Chinese and American medical systems

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Abstract. The health system is an important part of a country's social development, which is directly related to the health and well-being of people and the social stability of a country. Health systems promote, restore and maintain health. It is a complex whole, made up of all the actions, actors, resources and mechanisms involved in providing health care services to meet the health needs of the population. As the two largest economies in the world, there are significant differences in the health systems of China and the United States in terms of organizational models, funding sources, service delivery and management. The purpose of this article is to compare and analyze the health systems of China and the United States, discuss their strengths and weaknesses, and provide a reference for improving and perfecting medical services.

Keywords: Health system, America, China, Medical Services, Health Care Services.

1. Introduction

American Hospital Association showed that healthcare is one of the largest and most regulated industries in the world. New regulations and updates to existing regulations are introduced at a rapid pace and can be challenging for providers to keep up with [1]. Healthcare systems play an indispensable role in the protection and promotion of a country's overall health. Their function extends far past merely overseeing and coordinating healthcare services, but in reality, they serve as a backbone of the society, ensuring the populace's continued well-being. The core purpose of this paper is to undertake a comprehensive exploration of the health systems of both China and the United States. Utilizing the powerful tool of data analysis and drawing on a robust body of scholarly literature, we aim to delve into every dimension of these systems, thoroughly investigating their strengths and weaknesses. The analysis will be backed by a comprehensive understanding of the current Chinese and American healthcare policies. A comparative perspective will be adapted to yield a deeper understanding of the countries' distinct healthcare approaches. The Chinese health system, with its unique blend of traditional and modern treatments, will contrast the American health system, traditionally known for its high-cost and high-technology interventions. In addition, the specific challenges faced by both systems are set to be examined, with a focus on accessibility, quality, and efficiency of healthcare services. Equipped with extensive knowledge of both systems, this paper will then endeavor to propose solutions to the prevalent issues plaguing both Chinese and American health systems. Recognizing that the optimization of health systems is a dynamic process necessitating continual adjustment and evolution, we strive to present strategies that are both immediately applicable and sustainable in the long term. Overall, the ambition of this paper lies in contributing to the perpetual journey towards health system perfection. By depicting

an accurate picture of both Chinese and American healthcare systems and suggesting concrete, actionable solutions for improvement, author hopes to provide valuable insights that can help in perfecting healthcare services, thereby contributing to the improvement of health outcomes in both nations.

2. Chinese Health System

Before analyzing the pros and cons of the Chinese health system, let's take a look at the Chinese health system. Here the author picks out a few representative Chinese health policies for analysis.

China implements a basic medical insurance system, including two types: basic medical insurance for urban employees and basic medical insurance for urban and rural residents. The goal of this system is to ensure that all citizens can enjoy basic medical services. To achieve fairness in medical security, China is making efforts to consolidate and improve the overall level of basic medical insurance, unify the national scope of basic medical insurance medication, and standardize the determination of medical insurance payment policies. At the same time, it is also implementing the system of medical security benefit lists, defining the content of basic guarantees, clarifying benefit payment boundaries, specifying policy adjustment authority, and standardizing the policy formulation process. China has established a medical assistance system aimed at helping families and individuals who fall into poverty due to illness. This system provides tiered assistance, defines the scope of assistance costs, reasonably determines assistance standards, and establishes a long-term mechanism to prevent impoverishment due to illness.

In order to address the issue of seeking medical treatment in different places, China has implemented a policy of out-of-area direct settlement for medical treatment. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that patients can enjoy the same reimbursement treatment regardless of where they receive medical services.

The reform of China's health service and health policy has experienced the transformation from mass health movement to welfare, to marketization, and then back to public welfare [2]. Through the interpretation and analysis of the above medical policies, the author can now analyze the advantages and disadvantages of China's health system. To begin with, the fundamental medical insurance system in China is designed to cater to a large segment of the population. It ensures that basic healthcare services are accessible to many people, fostering a sense of security and well-being among the masses. The system's expansive coverage is indicative of the government's commitment to the health of its people. Secondly, the healthcare policy in China is devoted to achieving equity in medical security. This is accomplished by elevating the overall standard of fundamental medical insurance. The country has made significant strides in unifying the national scope of basic medical insurance medication, which means that insured individuals across the nation have access to the same list of prescribed drugs. The Chinese government is also making efforts to minimize the uneven distribution of medical resources. This shows a strong commitment to ensuring that everyone, regardless of where they live, has equal access to healthcare services. Moreover, China's medical assistance system acts as a safety net for families and individuals who are grappling with poverty brought on by illness. By providing critical support during such trying times, the system helps to alleviate financial stress and enables patients to focus on their recovery. Finally, addressing the issue of seeking medical treatment in different places is a key aspect of China's healthcare policy. Ensuring that patients receive the same reimbursement treatment, regardless of where they receive medical services, is crucial. This means that patients can seek the best available treatment without worrying about geographical restrictions or differing reimbursement rates. To sum up, the Chinese healthcare system, underpinned by these policies, seeks to provide wide coverage, promote fairness, offer crucial support to those in need, and enable access to quality medical treatment across various regions. It's a comprehensive approach that aims to ensure the health and well-being of every citizen.

Xi Jinping has said that "China is a big country, and China's policy can no longer make subversive mistakes on fundamental issues, and once they occur, they will be irreparable [3]. " Despite the significant advantages and accomplishments of China's health system and medical policy, it is undeniable that certain challenges remain. The Chinese government's persistent efforts to bridge the gap

in medical resources between urban and rural areas have indeed borne fruit, but disparities still exist. Urban areas, being centers of both population and wealth, are often at the forefront of medical services and tend to have more state-of-the-art facilities, skilled medical personnel, and comprehensive healthcare programs. Meanwhile, rural and remote regions, despite improvements, may not enjoy the same level of medical services. The quality and accessibility of healthcare in these areas can sometimes fall short of those in urban settings, largely due to the lesser availability of resources, lack of infrastructure, and difficulty in attracting and retaining skilled healthcare professionals. This uneven distribution of medical resources and services is a challenge that needs to be addressed to ensure healthcare equity and universal access to quality healthcare. Secondly, there is a need to reassess and possibly reform government public policies related to financial and personnel management in the health sector. The current policies might not adequately support a system that centers on health, which can deter the development and implementation of more effective health initiatives. Financial policies need to ensure that sufficient funding is allocated to areas that need it the most, such as improving access and quality of healthcare in rural areas. Over the past decade, China's total health expenditure has increased from 1,090 yuan per capita in 2008 to 4,700 yuan per capita in 2019, an increase of 331 percent, according to the data. But while spending on specialized public health organizations increased in absolute terms, their share of total health spending fell from 8.58 percent in 2008 to 5.47 percent in 2019, which has hindered the development of China's health sector [4]. In conclusion, while China's health system and medical policy have shown commendable progress, continuous efforts are needed to close the urban-rural healthcare gap and to ensure that public policies robustly support a health-central system.

3. US Health System

After analyzing the Chinese health system, the author will then analyze the American health system and some of its health policies. In the same way, the author picks out a few representative American health policies for analysis.

Medicare is a federal medical insurance program provided for individuals aged 65 and older, as well as certain disabled individuals. It is divided into several parts, including hospital expenses, medical expenses, Medicare Advantage, and prescription drug expenses. Medicaid is a federal and state collaborative medical insurance program designed for low-income individuals. Eligibility criteria and coverage may vary from state to state. Health insurance includes Health Savings Accounts (HSA) and Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA), which can be used in conjunction with high-deductible health insurance to save funds for medical expenses. Children's health insurance plan is a medical insurance plan for children from low-income families, sponsored by both the federal and state governments.

Through the interpretation and analysis of the above medical policies, the author can now analyze the advantages and disadvantages of China's health system.

Currently, the United States boasts a highly developed and mature medical system that is globally recognized. The country's medical facilities are top-notch, equipped with advanced and cutting-edge medical technologies. Its medical practitioners, including doctors and nurses, are some of the most skilled and experienced in the world, contributing significantly to the high standard of healthcare in the country. The number of medical specialists in the United States has increased significantly, as has the number of specialties and subspecialties, from a few dozen 50 years ago to more than 150 in 2012 [5]. The U.S. healthcare policy is primarily focused on increasing the reach and coverage of medical insurance. Programs such as Medicare and Medicaid have been designed and implemented to ensure that certain sections of the population, particularly the elderly, disabled, and low-income individuals, receive adequate healthcare services. These policies are instrumental in enhancing the accessibility of healthcare facilities and services, as well as promoting equity in the distribution of healthcare resources across diverse social and economic groups. This approach towards ensuring healthcare for all is a testament to America's commitment to improving health and well-being among its population. In addition to ensuring accessibility and fairness, the U.S. healthcare policy also lays a strong emphasis on the enhancement of service quality within its healthcare institutions.

One of the challenges faced by U.S. healthcare policy is the high cost of medical care. Since 1970, total health costs in the United States have grown 2.5 to 3 percent faster than GDP [6]. Too many Americans lack health care coverage. Despite historic gains in coverage with the Affordable Care Act, the United States is the only high-income industrialized nation without universal health coverage [7]. Despite efforts to reduce unnecessary healthcare expenses through reform, overall medical costs remain high and continue to rise. What's worse, the implementation of U.S. healthcare policy has encountered difficulties, including political resistance, the influence of interest groups, and changes in the economic environment. According to relevant data, administrative costs account for 25% of total hospital expenditures in the United States [8]. This high cost of healthcare not only poses challenges for individuals but also for the effective implementation of U.S. healthcare policies. The execution of these policies often faces substantial difficulties including political resistance and the significant influence of interest groups, both aiming to protect their vested interests. Changes in the economic environment can also disrupt healthcare policy implementation and its effectiveness. Moreover, these factors may impede the effectiveness of policies and the profundity of the required reforms. To bring about a meaningful transformation in the U.S. healthcare system, these challenges must be addressed comprehensively and sustainably. It would involve designing policies that are economically viable, resilient to political and economic changes, and above all, committed to ensuring universal health coverage and affordability.

4. Conclusion

A sound, well-functioning health system requires various elements to come together in harmony. Crucially, it needs trained and motivated health workers who are prepared to provide high-quality care to patients. These professionals require a well-maintained infrastructure in which to operate – hospitals, clinics, laboratories, and more [9]. This infrastructure should be supported by a reliable supply of medicines and technologies, ensuring healthcare providers have the tools they need at their disposal. Yet these tangible resources must be underpinned by intangible ones: strong health plans that clearly outline the country's health policy, backed by evidence-based policies that are informed by the latest health research. Adequate funding is also a necessity, providing the economic foundation on which the health system is built. Comparing the healthcare systems of China and the United States serves to illuminate the complexities inherent in healthcare provision at a global level. Each system has its own unique set of strengths and weaknesses, each a reflection of the diverse priorities and challenges that different societies face. In China, there is a strong emphasis on ensuring broad coverage and fairness within the healthcare system, demonstrating a deep commitment to affording all citizens access to healthcare services. Nevertheless, it faces significant challenges in ensuring an equitable distribution of resources and providing high-quality care across the country's vast and diverse regions. On the other hand, the healthcare system in the United States prioritizes accessibility and quality. However, it faces significant challenges in terms of affordability and the existence of coverage gaps. Despite significant advancements in medical technology and innovation, disparities in access and outcomes remain significant. Addressing these challenges isn't a single-nation task. It requires a multifaceted approach that transcends national borders. Collaboration and a sharing of best practices are critical. Policymakers, healthcare stakeholders, and international organizations can work together towards a future in which all individuals have access to equitable, efficient, and high-quality healthcare services. This vision transcends geographical location or socioeconomic status and focuses on universal health as a fundamental human right [10].

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