

E. Health Care Reform and Sustainability, Chaired by Dr Ben Fong

Finding New Pathways to Ensure the Financial Sustainability of China's Medical Insurance System for Urban Employees

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Abstract

Since 1998, the Chinese government has implemented a mandatory insurance program, the Urban Employee Basic Medical Insurance (UEBMI), to cover medical costs incurred in outpatient treatment and hospitalization services. Due to the rapid growth of China's elderly population and rising medical costs, the Chinese government faces increasing challenges to establish a responsive and financially sustainable medical insurance system in order to respond to changing needs and demands. The UEBMI is implemented within a specific political and socio-economic context. It is shaped by the combining forces of institutions, interests and ideas. This paper aims at examining why the UEBMI system is not financially sustainable. It aims at studying the problems that have plagued the current UEBMI system, the government's response to these problems, and making policy recommendations that can fix these problems. This paper argues that establishing a financially sustainable medical insurance system requires the government to make unremitting efforts to strengthen the administration of the insurance fund, reform drug price control policy and hospital system. This paper provides the most updated information about the UEBMI in China.

Easing the Manpower Shortage Challenge through Exploring Alternative Employee Resourcing Models

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Abstract

At present, Hong Kong's elderly population stands at about 1.07 million. One in seven Hong Kong people is aged 65 or above. The ratio will rise to one in three (or 2.56 million elderly people) by 2041. At least 26% of those aged 85 or above require residential care as the group of those aged between 75 and 80 and above has risen markedly. An ageing population presents a two-pronged challenge. It is estimated that additional 5,000 staff are needed on top of the 20,000 already working in the elderly homes. On the other hand, a large number of frontline workers will be entering into their retirement age. While the Government and the elderly care sector have made various efforts in putting forward new strategies and pilot projects in order to alleviate the problem, including setting up training programmes to attract youth and homemakers to join the labour market. In this paper, we will be looking at the challenges that the elderly service sector is faced with, in particular, the acute shortage of frontline workers. We will be exploring other viable options, like tapping the potential of the "young-olds" and retirees to re-enter the labour market.

Development of Private Hospitals in Hong Kong: an Institutional Explanation

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Abstract

The Hong Kong government proposes the Voluntary Health Insurance Scheme in order to alleviate the healthcare financing burden on tax. The viability of the Scheme depends on whether the capacity of private hospitals will increase significantly in order to meet the projected increase of demand after the implementation of the scheme. To gauge the future development of private hospitals, this paper reviews the development of the private hospitals. Overall, the development of private hospitals can be described as stagnant. There has been no new private hospital for more than two decades. Private hospitals often complain about unfair competition from the Hospital Authority which is heavily subsidized by the government. However, the stagnation began in the 1980s or even earlier, at least a decade before the Hospital Authority was established. I argue that the sluggish development of private hospitals can be traced to three problems, including the lack of transparency and standardization of fee-charging, the variability of the quality of healthcare service, and the management problems related to corporate governance and others. However, these problems of private hospitals need to be further traced to the institutional environment that they are facing, characterized by government regulation which is minimal, and the fiercest resistance of the medical profession to any proposal of healthcare reform which appears to infringe its professional autonomy. The problems of private hospitals are a result of their adaptation to specific institutional environment. However, institutions are sticky. Without a fundamental revamping of this institutional environment that private hospitals have been facing, there is no reason to expect that private hospitals will pick up the speed to increase its capacity suddenly. In this light, one cannot escape from the conclusion that the prospect of the Voluntary Health Insurance Scheme is gloomy.

Public Private Partnership in Health Care in Hong Kong

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Abstract

The Hong Kong Government is committed to involving the private sector to provide better and more efficient public facilities and services to encourage innovation, to enhance productivity, to speed up project and service delivery, and to increase opportunities for investment in Hong Kong. Some merits of Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) include utilizing the skills and experience, access to technology, and innovation of the private sector for better delivery of public services and enhancing unity of responsibilities for delivering services. Potential problems are unreliable levels of service and greater secrecy and lack of transparency resulting in benefits not being shared with the public agency. PPP in healthcare is expected to redress the imbalance between the public and private sectors with improvement in the quality of care, better use of the resources, enhanced training and sharing of experience and expertise, and ultimately helping to ensure sustainability of the healthcare system. These will be achieved through savings and enhance cost-effectiveness, optimal use of human resources, facilitating cross-fertilization of expertise and experience and promoting healthy competition and collaboration. In primary care, services are purchased from the private sector, allowing greater choice of services for individuals in the community. In secondary and tertiary care, again services are purchased from the private sector, and private doctors are employed on a part-time basis in public hospitals, particularly in tertiary and specialized services. There are also potential in development of hospital facilities and medical centres of excellence. The Government has been piloting a new model for subsidised primary care services, the Elderly Health Care Voucher Pilot Scheme, which entails the “money-follows-patient” concept. Together with the healthcare profession, the Government is finding the effective strategies for PPP in healthcare.

Aging Society Encourages Public and Private Movement in Thailand

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Abstract

The world's aging population is about to reach two billions in 2050. By the time, Thailand is the first country in ASEAN to become an aging society. That is, such trend significantly impact to public and private responses serving Thai aging population in the future. This study aims to identify the aging society in Thailand. The finding can provide the current situation, related government policy, and business implications to serve Thai aging population in the future. Content analysis is used in this study. The results showed that Thai aged 65 years and above averagely increase four percent annually, and account for eight to ten percent of the population. This figure is expected to reach 27 percent of the population in 2050. Additionally, Thai government is now putting more effort to improvement of elder's safety and security such as upgrade healthcare system nationwide. Secondly, development of elder's health and hygiene for example educating and facilitating elders' general or specific need. Thirdly, development of financial security including extend working life after retirement as well as promote national saving fund to ensure elder's wealthy after stop working. Besides, aging population also creates business or investment opportunities, particularly in the following industries including healthcare, real estate, financial institution, as well as foreign direct investment (FDI) currently develop related projects to serve both retired Thai and non-Thai retirees.

Towards Exposure-Based Health Impact Indicators: Application to Hong Kong

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Abstract

Effective policy for air pollution requires appropriate indicators for the potential health impact of pollutants. Current indicators are based mostly on time-averaged pollutant concentrations. This is potentially misleading as the pollutant exposure is not accounted for directly. Such a situation is particularly relevant in Hong Kong because the urban morphology may cause harmful pollutants to be partially trapped near the pedestrian level, where they may be inhaled by humans over a long time interval. This paper investigates the relevance of pollutant exposure and exposure time to health and describes the applicability of the statistical distribution of exposure times to Mong Kok and Tsim Sha Tsui, two densely packed areas of Hong Kong. The findings of this study should provide insights for urban planners.