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Review of: Essentials of the U.S. Health Care System, 2nd Edition

Author: Shi, L., Singh, A.

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OVERVIEW

The purpose of this work is to acclimatize the health science student to the non-clinical administrative processes of the U.S. health care delivery system. This book discusses the intricacies of finance, insurance, payment methods, and delivery at a level appropriate to graduate students of health policy and health information/informatics (HII). The major focus is how these functions impact quality, access, and cost. These considerations are necessary for future health care professionals to provide effective care to the population. A total of fourteen chapters present a wide range of concepts from the foundations of the current system of delivery to future issues that the system must accommodate.

CHAPTERS

Chapter One: *Major Characteristics of U.S. Health Care Delivery* offers an introduction to the current system and how it functions. It introduces the quad function model as the foundation of the U.S. system. This chapter also compares the U.S. delivery system with those of other successful socialized delivery systems such as Canada and Great Britain.

Chapter Two: *Foundation of U.S. Health Care Delivery* presents definitions of health, disease, and illness, and defines the determinants and measures of health. This chapter also introduces the concepts of market justice and social justice (which are discussed at length in chapter two) and the impact of culture on the organization and delivery of health care.

Chapter Three: *Historical View of U.S. Health Care Delivery* gives a historical account of the delivery system dating from pre-industrial America. It addresses the development of medical training, practice, and healthcare institutions. This chapter also discusses the American Medical Association's (AMA) role in reform, the effect of information technology, and globalization.

Chapter Four: *Health Care Providers and Professionals* not only introduces the student to the most important clinical and nonclinical professionals of the system, but also to training and education requirements. The disproportionate amount of generalist to specialist and the effects of this maldistribution are also discussed. There is also mention of the importance of advance practice nurses to alleviate this maldistribution.

Chapter Five: *Technology and Its Effects* discusses the cost, quality, and moral implications of technological advances. This chapter also discusses the research and development process and how technology is evaluated and diffused into society.

Chapter Six: *Financing and Reimbursement Methods* discusses an interesting concept called the moral hazard. Also discussed are the different types of insurance and managed care plans (MCO's). Though similar, the authors do an excellent job of

distinguishing between insurance and MCO's. Reimbursement methodology, Medicare, Medicaid, and the prospective payment system (PPS) are also discussed at length.

Chapter Seven: *Outpatient Services and Primary Care* defines outpatient care, the scope of its services, and the settings in which it is delivered. Primary care and its domains are also defined.

Chapter Eight: *Hospitals* defines inpatient care and discusses the evolution of today's hospital facilities. Types of hospitals, licensure, certification, and accreditation for hospital facilities are also discussed.

Chapter Nine: *Managed Care and Integrated Systems* defines managed care and its control mechanisms, and the different types of integrated networks. This chapter also discusses the impact of managed care on health care cost, access, and quality.

Chapter Ten: *Long-Term Care Services* discusses the wide range of services provided as part of inpatient and outpatient long term care.

Chapter Eleven: *Underserved Populations* identifies medically underserved populations of the United States and discusses the factors that contribute to their vulnerability. Also identified in this chapter are various government initiatives enacted to address these disparities.

Chapter Twelve: *Cost, Access and Quality* identify the three major cornerstones of the health care industry as cost, access, and quality. There is considerable discussion on the facts that contribute to and the implications of these issues on the current and future system.

Chapter Thirteen: *Health Policy* discusses at length the different types of health policies, the issues they attempt to address, and the process by which they are enacted. The discussion in this chapter also gives the reader a rudimentary understanding of American politics in general.

Chapter Fourteen: *The Future of Health Services Delivery* discusses the propensity of adopting a national health care system. Also discussed are issues of rising cost, immigration, reform, globalization, bioterrorism, technology, and the geriatric population.

TABLES, EXIBITS, AND FIGURES

A list of tables, figures, and exhibits are presented at the beginning of the book; numbered by chapter for ease of reference. The figures are used to illustrate complexities such as the functions of managed care and the characteristics of the US delivery system and how they relate to each other. The tables are used to compare like elements. In chapter one the first table compares the delivery systems of Canada, Great Britain, Germany, and the US. The exhibits list pertinent information such as laws or discoveries. These lists are useful in digesting information because they are presented in bullet form. The first exhibit in chapter two lists the indicators used to assess the health of a population. There are also political cartoons at the beginning of each chapter. These are not indexed like the tables, figures, and exhibits but they serve to illustrate the overarching theme of each chapter.

OVERALL SUITABILITY / AUDIENCE

Though more concise than its first edition, this second edition is still very comprehensive. The level of discussion is appropriate for graduate level students in health policy, and health or healthcare programs. The text addresses topics that are indispensable for clinical and nonclinical healthcare professionals to understand the environment in which they work. This book presents facts as points of discussion and encourages the reader to think and explore the implication of these facts. The vocabulary used in the text makes it a challenge to undergraduates but provides scholarly insight to post graduate students. The discussions allow students to think abstractly about major issues and the future of health services delivery. The text is not inundated with facts but research is presented in an understandable fashion. Concepts are introduced then reiterated in later chapters, and most concepts are related back to their impact on health care cost, access, and quality.