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COMMENTARY

Healthy China 2030: A Vision for Health Care

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Keywords: HC 2030, blueprint, public policy, basic medical and health service.

Introduction

In October 2016, President Xi Jinping announced the Healthy China (HC 2030) blueprint, a bold declaration that made public health a precondition for all future economic and social development. The HC 2030 blueprint, released in Beijing by the Chinese government, includes 29 chapters covering public health services, environment management, the Chinese medical industry, and food and drug safety [1]. The HC 2030 blueprint has been established as a national strategy and sets a goal of enabling everyone to be involved in health, share health, and be responsible for health. There are five specific goals to improve the level of health nationwide, control major risk factors, increase the capacity of the health service, enlarge the scale of the health industry, and perfect the health service system. The blueprint is based on four core principles, that is, health priority, reform and innovation, scientific development, and justice and equity, and outlines 13 core indicators to be reported in 2020 and 2030. The framework of HC 2030 is shown in Figure 1.

Health is the indispensable prerequisite for the overall well-being of people as well as the foundation of economic and social development. The Program for a Healthy China 2030 reviewed and approved by the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee has set an action plan for the construction of a healthy China in the next 15 years. With a profound understanding of the great strategic significance of a healthy China, we need to make an effort from the perspective of constructing a society that is well off in all aspects of life, foster a new engine for economic and social development, improve structural reform of the medical supply side, enhance national well-being and social stability, propel global healthy governance, and fulfill the commitment that China has made to the international community.

We need to not only have a clear understanding of the progress China has made in medical and health services but also face the challenges in constructing a healthy China. After years of

ongoing efforts, a basic national health insurance system has been completed, and remarkable progress has been made in the reform of the medical health care system. As a result, improvement in health care is moving forward swiftly; a healthy environment in relation to the atmosphere and water quality has been achieved to some extent. In the meantime, as a result of industrialization and urbanization, aging of the population, continuous changes in disease spectra, ecological conditions, and people's lifestyles, there are still some weak areas to be improved with regard to the development of health undertakings [2].

Four Core Principles

HC 2030, which is the Chinese vision of health care, is built on four core principles. The first is *health priority*. Based on conditions nationwide, health care should be prioritized and placed in a strategic position in the whole process of public policy implementation. The second core principle is *innovation*. The health care industry should follow government leadership, give play to the role of the market mechanism, and simultaneously speed up reform in key areas. The third principle is *scientific development*. The blueprint emphasizes the importance of both prevention and cure, focusing on prevention and control, Chinese and Western medicine, and changes in the service mode to reduce the gaps in basic health services. The fourth principle is *fairness and justice*. The rural areas of the country are given special attention to promote equal access to basic public health services and to maintain public welfare.

Healthy Policy in the United States and Japan

With the rapid aging of the population, advances in medical technology, and major shifts in health care, there is growing social awareness with regard to an individual's complete

The authors have indicated that they have no conflicts of interest with regard to the content of this article.

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2212-1099/\$36.00 – see front matter © 2017 Published by Elsevier Inc. on behalf of International Society for Pharmacoeconomics and Outcomes Research (ISPOR).

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.vhri.2017.04.001>

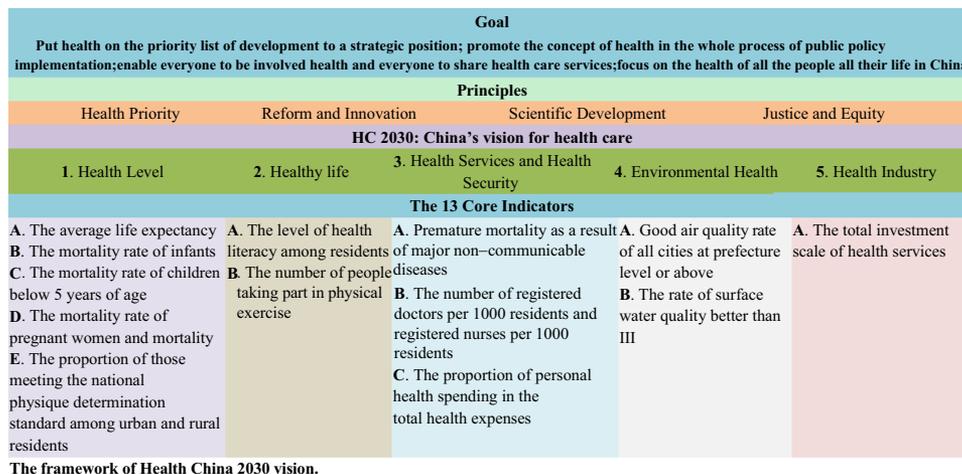


Fig. 1 – The framework of the Healthy China 2030 vision.

wellness potential. In this situation, an optimal health care system must be implemented to achieve national goals for the people's health and well-being. In the United States, every 10 years, the Department of Health and Human Services leverages scientific insights and lessons learned from the past decade, along with new knowledge of current data, trends, and innovations [3]. Healthy People 2020, released in 2010, reflects the department's assessments of major risks to health and wellness, changes in public health priorities, and emerging issues related to the nation's health preparedness and disease prevention. Public participation is shaping the Healthy People 2020 program, its purposes, goals, organization, and action plans. As a national initiative, Healthy People's success depends on coordinated commitment to improve the health of the nation.

In Japan, a health care program, Japan 2035, has been built for the next 20 years and designed for all types of lifestyles and people—from children to older people, from patients to providers. Japan 2035 aims to enable individuals to feel secure and supported to make the life and work choices that are right for them [4]. The health care program contains three key principles—fairness, solidarity built on autonomy, and sharing of prosperity for Japan and the world. The program calls for reform that is committed to transparency and accountability and, in return, is supported by a secure financial structure that promotes these same values. It also requires the ability to bring about reform based on mid-term and long-term perspectives, facilitate localized responses, encourage evidence-based policy making, and cultivate capable professionals.

Major Health Targets

HC 2030 is a general guideline document for promoting people's health in the coming 15 years [1]. The emphasis should be on combining health policy with all other major policies, such as reducing environmental pollution. The focus should be on disease prevention and encouraging people to adopt healthy lifestyles. Simultaneously, the public health service system and the health services industry should be improved to facilitate early detection, early diagnosis, and early treatment of diseases, as these are of great significance to reduce the mortality rate [5].

The five specific targets of HC 2030 are to improve the level of health, control major risk factors, increase health service capacity, expand health industry scale, and perfect the health service system. In concrete terms, HC 2030 requires marked improvement in the quality of people's physical condition and

an average life expectancy of 79 years by 2030; increase in the people's health literacy; development of healthy lifestyles; formation of an energy-efficient, resource-efficient, and environment-friendly industries; ensuring food and drug safety; elimination of risks of serious illnesses; building a high-quality, efficient, and integrated medical and health service system; refinement of the public health security system; promotion of health science and technology innovation; improvement in the quality and level of health services; establishment of an optimal health industry system; formation of a group of enterprises equipped with innovation ability and international competitiveness; a healthy police laws and regulations system; and realization of modernization management.

Core Health Indicators

HC 2030 outlines 13 core indicators to be reported in 2020 and 2030 [6], comparing expected values with actual values in different years to assess people's health level (five core indicators), healthy life (two core indicators), the health services and health security (three core indicators), healthy environment (two core indicators), and the health industry (one core indicators). Accordingly, specific indicators of achieved "health level," such as average life expectancy, infant mortality rate, mortality rate of children <5 years of age, pregnancy and maternal mortality rates, and the proportion of urban and rural residents meeting the national standard for physical well-being, have to be incarnated. "Health life" is assessed by using premature mortality resulting from major noncommunicable diseases as an indicator, and it has a set goal of a 30% relative reduction from 2015 to 2030. Two other targets are achieving three registered doctors and 4.7 registered nurses per 1000 residents by 2030. The outline also aims to further ease people's financial burden imposed by health care and medical treatments. Currently, in China, 29.3% of the citizens' health cost is paid for by individuals; the guideline recommends a reduction to 25% by 2030. Ensuring "environmental health" is also one of the main goals, and based on the blueprint, by 2030, the good air quality rate for all cities at the prefecture level or above should reach 80%; the rate of surface water quality better than III should reach 70%. An economic indicator called "total investment scale of health services" is adopted to evaluate the health industry. In addition to the 13 core indicators mentioned above, many other special indicators are set as expected goals for comprehensive assessment; for example, a target to reduce the smoking rate among people ≥ 15 years

of age to 20% by 2030 from the current 27.7% has been set according to the HC 2030 blueprint.

Action Plan and Challenges

The HC 2030 blueprint includes several important areas of significance with regard to concept and action. First, a major shift in the concept of health in the document has been from pursuit of economic development alone to promotion of coordinated development of ecology, health, and economy. To some degree, using health as an indicator of the country's financial prosperity has been shifted further down the agenda [7]. Second, the focus of health services has been changed from disease treatment to health promotion and health management. The blueprint of HC 2030 indicates clearly that government should enhance the system of medical health services, reform the mode of health care provision, improve the level and quality of the health services, and simultaneously pay more attention to the factors that affect human health and effectively prevent disease and, ultimately, promote health. Third, it is everyone's responsibility to achieve a healthy China, not just that of the administrative departments of public health. The outline emphasizes that all people should be responsible for their own health and that government should play a leading role, incorporate health care policy into all major policies, and mobilize all people to participate in the program. Additionally, more attention should be paid to high-risk populations, including women, children, seniors, migrants, and low-income groups. Finally, the health industry, especially the health care services, should advance in a timely manner. Many signals have been released to promote development of the health industry, such as expansion of investment capital to 16 trillion Yuan for the construction of the services industry [8]; vigorous development of the press and publishing, radio, TV, digital animation, and other culture-related industries; active development of the Chinese medicine industry, rehabilitation medicine, specialized sports fitness, nursing services, and counseling services; and meeting more requirements of and higher-quality health services for different populations within the country.

Several major challenges still remain, even though the HC 2030 blueprint has provided specific tasks and direction for the development of health care services. One challenge is the scientific nature of the indicators. For example, the average life expectancy of the residents of some cities is >80 years, but according to the blueprint, the goal is 79 years by 2030 [9]. In addition, premature death caused by major noncommunicable diseases is not used as an indicator for disease surveillance in China [10]; thus, it is imperative for relevant government departments to conduct data collection. Without basic data, it is difficult to set reasonable and objective target values. Another challenge is communication and cooperation among different departments. Information bias will result if the departments do not cooperate or adopt different ways to collect data. In the United States, the

Healthy People process is inclusive; its strength is directly tied to collaboration. The development process in the Healthy People 2020 program strives to maximize transparency, public input, and stakeholder dialogue to ensure that it is relevant to diverse public health needs, and it seizes every opportunity to achieve its goals [3]. Since its inception, the Healthy People program has become a broad-based, public engagement initiative, with thousands of citizens helping to shape it at every step along the way. Currently, Healthy People 2010 is leading the way to achieving increased quality of life and years of healthy life and the elimination of health disparities [3]. It is important that the Chinese government learn lessons from the program in the United States [3,11] and make a greater effort to promote institutional reform, cooperation, and communication.

Highlighted Points

In the construction of a healthy China, efforts should be made in the following aspects: 1) prevention of diseases placed in the first place and enhancement of the health of all people; 2) reform of the medical and health care systems in a comprehensive manner; 3) cultivation of a green, safe, and healthy environment; 4) vigorous promotion of the development of the health care industry; and 5) further enhancement of the construction of social policies and institutional systems for the implementation of strategy for a healthy China.

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