ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION OF HEALTH POLICY: Key Concepts

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Key focus

- research methodology for asking health services research and health policy questions
Definitions of health services research

- a multidisciplinary field of inquiry, both basic and applied, that examines the use, costs, quality, accessibility, deliver, organization, financing, and outcomes of health care services to increase knowledge and understanding of the structure, processes and effects of health services for individuals and populations

is concerned with problems in the organization, staffing, financing, utilization and evaluation of health services. [It] subsumes both medical care and patient care research. It could well be termed “socio-medial” research.

Definitions, cont.

- is a recognized, multidisciplinary field . . [with a focus on certain generic issues, such as] the organization and financing of medical care, utilization patterns, patient and provider relations, social and behavioral epidemiology, health information systems and monitoring and evaluation of health services.

Definitions, cont.

- is the integration of epidemiologic, sociological, economic and other analytic sciences in the study of health services.

Definitions, cont.

- is inquiry to produce knowledge about the structure, processes or effects of personal health services. . . [and] satisfies two criteria: it deals with some features of the structure, process or effects of personal health services; at least one of the features is related to a conceptual framework other than that of contemporary applied biomedical science.

Definitions, cont.

- is a field of inquiry that examines the roles of organization, finance, manpower, technology and prevention in the provision of health care services, and their impact on utilization, cost and quality of care. 

[Drawing] on many disciplines. 
Including biostatistics, epidemiology, health economics, medicine, nursing, operations research, psychology and medical sociology.

a field of inquiry that examines the impact of the organization, financing, and management of health care services on the delivery, quality, cost, access to, and outcomes of such services.

Valentine W. AHSR, personal communication, 1991
Challenges for health services research

- lack of widely adopted standard definition
- conducted in many different settings
- diverse purposes (data collection, development of instruments, decision-making)

- focus on different geographic levels, populations and specific sub-groups
- disparate set of theories, concepts, statistics, devices, instruments
- wide range of time frames

IOM, 1991
Differentiating policy from other questions

- **Clinical question:** will X happen if I do Y
  - outcome defined in individual clinical terms

- **Basic research question:**
  - not tied to outcomes
  - often at a sub-individual level
Policy questions

- Related to a choice among courses of action to achieve:
  - Appropriate Access (equity)
  - Desirable Quality (efficacy)
  - Affordable Cost (efficiency)
- Related to questioning or clarifying one or more issues in a policy statement
Five key questions

- How does this option affect over-utilization?
- Will this option actually result in real access?
- How will this option address the uninsured?
- Will this policy remove involuntary cross-subsidization?
- Is Canada’s grass really greener?
"Dummy" policy statement format

- In order to accomplish ____,
- it is the policy of ______
- that ___
- should do ____
- for ______
- at ______ cost.
Personal sample

- In order to stay healthy,
- it is the policy that I
- should exercise [for myself]
- by running/walking 3x/week
- at the cost of getting up 40 minutes early
In order to foster patient decision-making, it is my policy that I should always get informed consent for nursing care, at the risk of some patients saying "no"
In order to foster the public's health, it is the policy of the Association of State Health Officials that governors should hire professionally qualified health directors, at competitive salaries.
In order to provide competitively priced services,

it is the policy of the community hospital

that the professional nursing staff ratio

will be reduced by 20% over the next 3 months by attrition.
In order to stay within budget,

it is the policy of X state Medicaid agency

that home health services

will be authorized by payment review staff

only in lieu of hospital days.
In order to prevent an increase in drug resistant TB, all medical providers are required to refer their patients for directly observed therapy or provide monthly reports on patient adherence to therapy.
Actor questions:

- who is doing this?
- who could be doing this?
- how do two or more actors compare?
Resource questions

- what has to be present for this to work?
- what variations can be made?
Action choice questions

- what is being done?
- what else could be done?
- how do two or more actions compare?
Outcome questions

- what is the range of results?
- do results vary with changes in actor or actions?
- how does outcome vary by length of time (output vs. outcome)?
Overall policy questions

- what is range of possible choices?
- who is defining the range?
- what are the defining factors in choice?
Cost specific

- what is the cost?
- what is the cost compared to the benefit?
- what is the cost compared to other choices?
Research article evaluations

- Problem statement clarity
- Literature review completeness
- Conceptual framework strength
- Hypothesis (if applicable)
- Research design quality
- Population definition clarity
Evaluations, cont.

- Measurement and instruments validity & reliability
- Data collection appropriateness
- Data analysis adequacy
- Conclusions and implications