

Private providers may lack access to essential diagnostic services and treatments. One approach has been to provide them with prepackaged drugs for common conditions such as malaria and sexually transmitted infections.

*Social marketing, Use of vouchers and Consumer protection:* Quality can be maintained if there exist a suitable set of laws on consumer protection, provided at least these are reasonably well implemented. The two most common avenues for relief in the arena of medical care are the Consumer Protection Act and various civil courts. It is not surprising that the various consumer commissions established under the Consumer Protection Act (COPRA) of 1986 have begun playing a key role in protecting consumer rights, in spite of their relatively recent origin. The main rationale for COPRA was that it could offer a quicker and cheaper way for consumers to address their grievances. Certainly, a number of cases related to insurance and medical negligence have reached these courts.

The major issue in regulation is implementation, which has typically been extremely weak. Regulation is unlikely to have had a major impact on private providers or on market structure and explains the widespread development of the informal private sector. Growth of the private sector is largely determined externally, even when enabling measures intended to support the sector are in place. Important opportunities to regulate, before the private sector becomes both politically and economically strong enough to resist, should not be missed by low-income countries. Regulation seems to be a function of the market as well as, potentially, an influence on it.

Science and technology have profoundly influenced the course of human civilization. Science promises its unlimited potential to bring revolutionary changes in human lives for better. The governments should ensure the fullest use of scientific developments for the well-being of people and whole of human kind. We must take science to the people. Research and development institutions must be managed imaginatively and efficiently to advance and utilize science and technology for health development in the best possible manner.

Quality improvement is a revolutionary idea in health care. The idea is to raise the level of care-no matter how good it may already be-through a continuous search for improvement. Quality improvement must become an integral and essential part of an institution. Making quality a top priority requires fundamental changes in organizational culture, in goals and guidelines, and in daily operations. QM must be driven from both the bottom and top of the health system. Persistence is crucial. It remains a challenge to find innovative approaches that improve the quality of health service delivery. Quality in health care would substantially improve if only some way could be found to secure more comprehensive and systematic uptake of the findings of biomedical research and development through implementation in everyday clinical practice. There is need to developing valid guidelines. Public health should be concerned with not only the health and health care needs of

populations but with the quality of care provided to the population. To contribute effectively to improving the quality of patient care it is important that public health physicians develop experience of the methods for achieving improvement.

The dominance of private provision in the health systems of low-income countries makes it vital to conduct more research into understanding and influencing their behavior and to experiment more with alternative strategies. In particular, research is necessary on the success of demand-side strategies, which could both complement and increase the effectiveness of interventions targeted at providers.

The organizational commitment to continuously improve the quality of the patient care is the central concern of health care institutions. CQI relates to the processes for change and institutional development, and focuses on getting the best out of your resources. Quality improvement should be a regular, expected, familiar, inevitable part of professional life. A holistic view of quality is one that emphasizes the results of addressing trends and improvements over time.

An increase in aging population is one of the most dramatic demographic trends in the world today. Many elders present many complex diseases and require complex care and disease management. The challenge also presents many opportunities in the healthcare field and a shortage of providers in rural areas.

The health care industry needs a change model that will facilitate a learning environment to enable clinicians to manage change while simultaneously developing health care workers who are knowledgeable about contemporary health care practices. Clinicians need to engage in deliberations about new models of care. This will necessitate a willingness to scrutinise closely their existing practices and not continue to attempt to apply outmoded processes and practices. There needs to be a closer alignment between the consumer's actual needs and the roles, functions and activities of nurses. This will require challenging old-world views if we are to capitalise on this opportunity for re-conceptualizing and organizing healthcare delivery.

The challenge is to find ways to improve upon the existing situation in the health sector. A potential for improvement exists in areas including the overall costs of care, financial equity, and the quality of care. A sustained improvement in these areas would play a significant role in advancing the primary goal of health policy – health, itself.

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*P. D. Gulati, Editor, JIMSA*