



## Unit 1: What can health economics teach us ?



### Introduction by the scientific coordinator of the Health Economics MOOC

- ➔ Welcome to our MOOC on health economics. We hear about health care and medical breakthroughs every day, but a lot less is said about health economics, except when there are budget cuts. This branch emerged a little later than other branches of economics, namely stemming from the research of US Nobel Laureate Kenneth Arrow, published in 1963. But it took a long time for health economics to be implemented and recognized. To this day, and especially in France, it is less known than other branches. Thus, the main purpose of this MOOC is to teach you about health economics and dispel the misconception that economists are only interested in money, or in saving money. Our goal is to allow a large audience to learn about health economics, in France and abroad, and to raise interest about this branch of economics. How do we approach this topic? Firstly, we must differentiate positive analysis, which is purely descriptive, from normative analysis, in which value judgments are used to make recommendations. Making this distinction is essential. Secondly, we must determine what we know and what we do not know yet. This means adopting a scientific approach. Thirdly, we must systematically compare health and health care services to other comparable goods and services to uncover the specific nature of health. This will lead us to modules presented as broad questions, such as the second module, titled “Can we think of health as capital?”. Finally, we seek to define concepts, to demystify them in order to create a dialogue with actors and representatives within other health-related fields. How is this MOOC on health economics structured? First of all, in our approach, we raise controversial questions. There are no easy answers to these questions and our goal is to use this complexity to teach and allow for more structured thinking by introducing analysis tools. This approach also includes asking various questions, and browsing various branches of health economics to pick topics we are particularly interested in, to which we can apply economic reasoning. For instance, we will discuss investment in health in the first module. We will also look at wages among health care professionals, hospital pricing, and the way drug prices are set. The final important element of our approach is cooperating with decision-makers. The goal here is to mobilize many researchers from international or national teams, and to put them in contact with health care workers and decision-makers, be they health care regulatory agencies, authorities, or hospital management. For whom is this module intended? For anyone interested in matters of health economics, for economists wishing to discover this branch of economics, for decision-makers and professionals who seek to understand the economic issues of this field, and for anyone who is curious about this topic. There are no prerequisites, nothing you must know beforehand, though in order to understand certain modules, a knowledge of the structure of the health care system can help. How is this MOOC on health economics organized? It is made up of five separately developed modules. Each one made up of five to seven videos. Module 1 is an introduction. Module 2 is called “Can we think of health as capital?”. Module 3 is “Are medicines an economic good like any other?”. Module 4 is “Is health care production the same as any other occupation?”. Module 5 is “Are hospitals a business like any other?”. Some topics will have videos on theory and others will provide examples. Each module contains a range of questions and quizzes, and links to resources such as videos or articles will be made available to the participants.

