



Unit 4: Is health care production the same as any other occupation ?



4. The responsiveness of health care systems

- ➔ My name is Silvana Robone, I am a professor of economics at the University of Insubria and Bocconi University, Italy. I am also an external affiliate at Hospinnomics. Today, I will give you a short talk on health system responsiveness which is a topic I have investigated for many years. Health system responsiveness can be defined as the way in which individuals are treated and the environment in which they are treated. It encompasses the notion of patient satisfaction. Health system responsiveness has been promoted by the WHO as a more desirable measure than patient satisfaction to evaluate health systems. Health system responsiveness refers to the non-clinical and non-financial dimensions of the quality of care. It reflects the respect for the human rights of patients and the interpersonal aspects of the health care process. Health system responsiveness is a multidimensional concept that covers eight domains. These domains are: autonomy, choice, clarity of communication, confidentiality of personal information dignity, prompt attention, quality of basic amenities and access to family and community support. Responsiveness data are often measured through patient self-reports and measured with a five-point ordinal and categorical scale. To give you an example of a question about responsiveness we can look at the following question in the area of communication. The question is: “How would you rate the quality of the communication between you and your health care provider?” There are five possible response categories, which are very bad, bad, moderate, good, and very good. Fundamental issues arise when we measure responsiveness in this way because the response categories can be interpreted differently across different socioeconomic groups. The responses given by individuals are influenced by their preferences and expectations. Such preferences and expectations may vary across countries but they may also vary across different socioeconomic groups within countries. Researchers termed this phenomenon “reporting heterogeneity”. We should then ask ourselves if subjective and self-reported measures of responsiveness are reliable. The study authored by Fiorentini, Verzulli, and myself tries to answer this question by investigating patient satisfaction data in Italy. The dataset used in the study comprises 39,000 observations collected in 30 hospital specialties, or groups of specialized wards in 28 public hospitals in the Italian Emilia-Romagna region between 2008 and 2012. The dataset contains information about patient satisfaction in five areas of responsiveness which are communication, privacy, dignity, waiting times, and quality of facilities. The dataset also contains information about hospital characteristics such as waiting times, medical and nursing staff workload the level of spending on non-clinical goods and services and the level of spending on staff education and training activities. The results of the study by Fiorentini and other authors suggest that the characteristics of the hospital specialty play a very relevant role in explaining the level of responsiveness reported by patients particularly concerning prompt attention and facility quality where there seems to be a very high correlation between subjective and self-reported measures of responsiveness and objective measures of responsiveness as recorded by hospitals. We believe that it would be very interesting to investigate the research question of Fiorentini and other authors by also looking at data from other countries such as France so that we can see whether this strong correlation between the self-reported measures of responsiveness and the more objectives ones can also be found in other countries.





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- However, on the basis of the preliminary evidence found in the literature so far we think we can conclude by saying that self-reported measures of responsiveness can be considered as reliable and viable tools for policy makers to design sound policy recommendations. That's it for today – thank you very much.
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