

The Past and Future of Universal Health Care: A political perspective

James Gillespie

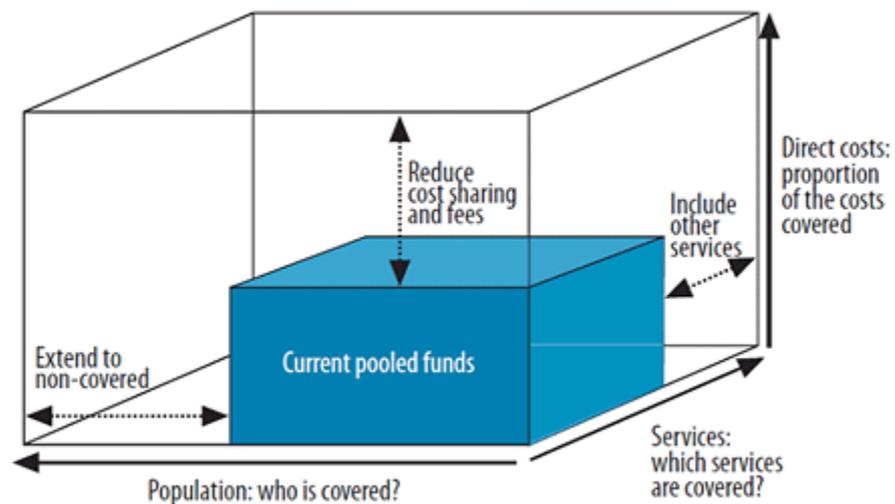
Deeble Institute Inaugural Symposium
Universal healthcare and its challenges for the future

24 September 2013

WHO Definition

- The goal of universal health coverage is to ensure that all people obtain the health services they need without suffering financial hardship when paying for them. This requires:
 - a strong, efficient, well-run health system;
 - a system for financing health services;
 - access to essential medicines and technologies;
 - a sufficient capacity of well-trained, motivated health workers.

The dimensions of UHC

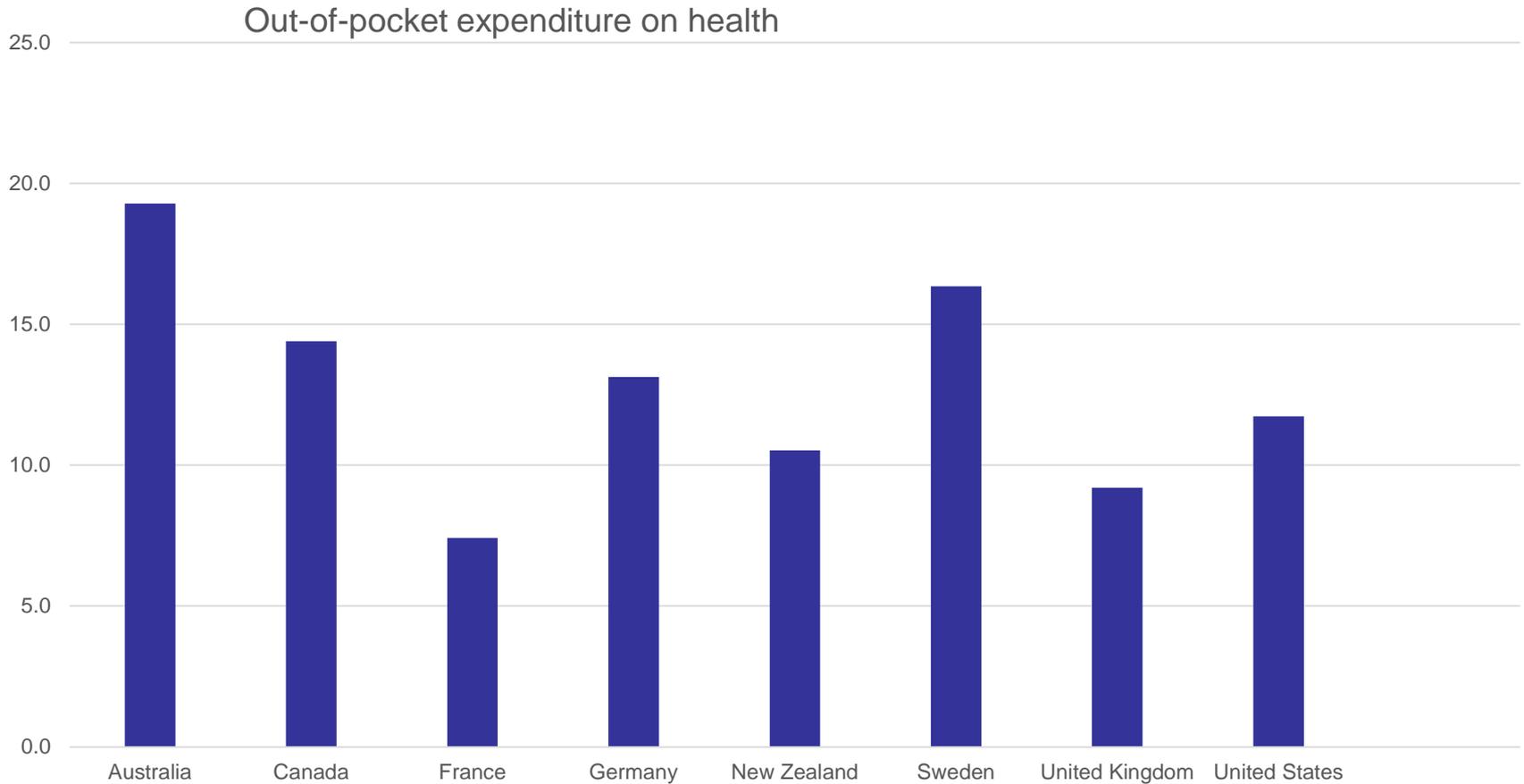


Three dimensions to consider when moving towards universal coverage

Source WHO, World Health Report 2010.

Out of pocket payments: Australia Compared: 2010.

Source: OECD Health Data: Health expenditure and financing: OECD Health Statistics (database).



Universality as equal access

- *We fiercely opposed the means test on the private health insurance rebate. We would like to see that means test gone because we believe in a universal health system. There's no means test on Medicare. Why should there be a means test on the private health insurance rebate?*

Tony Abbott Q & A National Press Club 13 January 2013

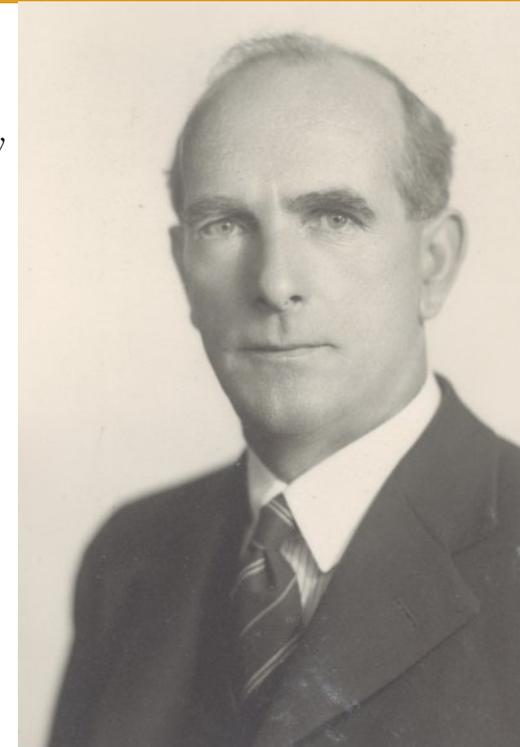
Foundations: 1944

Man has an individual and a collective fear: his fear of sickness and helplessness is for himself and those whom he loves. This applies to all, but presses especially heavily on the man with a small income. He is afraid that illness will come upon him or his family and he will not be able to earn if he is ill, or cannot meet the hospital and medical expenses for his wife or children: the fear of want and fear itself are one. The fear lives with him as a daily companion until the moment comes when he, like Job, must cry, 'The thing which I greatly feared is come upon me'.

It is to some degrees possible, by thrift, to lay by a small reserve against temporary periods of economic stress, but provision for the crippling debts of illness has not hitherto been possible.

The [Commonwealth government's] scheme... is designed to remove this fear'

Senator James Fraser, Minister for Health, The Health Policy of the Australian Government, Canberra 1944



Foundations: 1983

Medicare will provide the same entitlement to **basic medical benefits**, and treatment in a public hospital to every Australian resident regardless of income. In a society as wealthy as ours there should not be people putting off treatment because they cannot afford the bills. Basic health care should be the right of every Australian.

Neal Blewett 2nd Reading Speech, Medicare 1983.

Australian perspectives

- Health and welfare
 - Solidarity, human right or middle class entitlements?
 - Health and the welfare state
 - health as an industry, not just a welfare system
 - Medicare as a system for remunerating the medical profession.

Conflict points

- Medicare: identification of bulk billing with the principle of universality.
- Public values of equity:
 - Medicare as a national system
 - Regional disparities as a measure of equity

-
- What should be included within the scope of subsidised or ‘free’ health care?
 - What level of contribution (if any) should be expected from individuals?
 - Public and private finance and provision:
 - a question of what coverage is provided to whom, not who provides it.