

Health Politics and Policy

The last half of the 20th century witnessed explosive growth in science and technology in the developed world, including extraordinary developments in medicine. As medicine's capacity and complexity has grown, so has the popular sense that health care is a right and that the political system should deliver the care. Today, political systems grapple with every imaginable facet of health and health care, from educating and regulating the health workforce to creating systems to pay for the cost of care; from setting and funding the biomedical research agenda to determining who gets what care, when; from clinical preventive services to broader agendas for promoting population health. Although many of these questions seem economic in nature, they are inescapably political questions regarding the authoritative allocation of resources in response to the contention of values and ideas. This major reference collection shines a bright light on health politics. The editors have organized and introduced some of the best of the canon of health politics literature in four volumes covering political analysis of the emergence and shape of health systems, public perceptions of government's responsibility to assure the delivery of care, health care in a comparative perspective, and the politics of health reform. Volume One: Defining Health Systems - Path Dependence and Policy Emergence contains articles that emphasize critical perspectives on the development of given health system structures, with particular attention to the choices, and the paths that led to those choices, in favour of systems driven by private sectors (such as that of the United States) and systems that are more explicitly public (such as the European systems). Volume Two: Tensions in Health Policy - Ethics, Interests, and the Public treats health and health care broadly, including considerations of questions about the meaning of assertions to a "right" to health, the role of prevention in individual and public health, and contentious health care questions such as those surrounding stem cell research and reproductive rights. Volume Three: Health Systems in Comparative Perspective includes articles that illustrate global differences in the politics and policy of health care. Volume Four: the Contemporary Politics of Health System Reform examines the politics of health reform, including articles that address reform proposals as the sources of political conflict they inevitably are.



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