P04 / Public Policy Interventions for Increasing Health Insurance Coverage in Developing Countries

Topic : HEALTH POLICY

Chair : Dalano DaSouza (University of the West Indies, Five Islands Campus (Antigua and Barbuda))

Second Chair : Olvine Holas (JIPA Network LLC)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Despite global progress in healthcare accessibility, substantial gaps remain, particularly in lower-income regions such as Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and East Asia and the Pacific, where health insurance coverage is still limited. In these countries private insurance penetration is extremely low, while public insurance mechanisms (where they exist) are woefully inadequate, despite the pursuit of universal health coverage (UHC). This panel will examine public policy interventions that have been successful or show potential for increasing health insurance coverage in developing countries.

The papers submitted will evaluate current and past interventions, identify gaps, and propose policy directions for governments, international agencies, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to increase health insurance coverage, ensuring greater resilience and equity in health outcomes. For example, can the policy of employer and/or employee insurance mandates used in some US states be useful in developing countries? Can a model similar to the national insurance system in Canada be applied in African or Caribbean countries? What lessons can these countries learn about health insurance from Europe?

Increasing health insurance coverage in developing countries is a critical issue with substantial implications for public health, economic resilience, and social equality. Studies consistently show that health insurance coverage can improve health outcomes, protect against catastrophic health expenditures, reduce economic disparities, and improve a country's economic performance. However, many developing countries continue to face low coverage rates, largely due to financial constraints, lack of state interventions, undiversified risk pools, inter alia. Moreover, with the significant increases in older segments of the populations expected in these regions over the next two decades, health insurance coverage is coming into sharp focus.

This panel seeks to address the gap in the literature by focusing on public policy as a vehicle for improving health insurance coverage. While much research addresses healthcare interventions, less is available on the policy structures that support sustained insurance coverage expansion in lower-income countries. Comparative analysis of successful models and data-driven approaches from countries which have successfully expanded coverage can prove instructive for those countries which are lagging. Specifically, the panel will address the following areas of enquiry:

1. What public policy interventions have been most successful in increasing health insurance coverage in developed or developing countries, and what lessons can be drawn from these efforts?

2. What are the primary socioeconomic, cultural, or systemic barriers to health insurance uptake in these regions, and how can policy measures specifically address these challenges?

3. How can emerging financing mechanisms, such as microinsurance or digital health platforms, contribute to extending coverage to underserved populations?

4. What role can international agencies and private-sector partnerships play in scaling effective health insurance programs, and what challenges are associated with these partnerships?

5. How can public policies better target vulnerable groups, such as low-income populations, rural communities, and informal workers, who often face limited access to health insurance?

This session aligns with the conference's focus on actionable strategies to tackle pressing global challenges in public health and will provide insights into policy interventions that support sustainable health system strengthening in developing countries.

CALL FOR PAPERS

As part of the 7th International Conference on Public Policy, the International Public Policy Association invites submissions for the for the panel ‘Public Policy Interventions for Increasing Health Insurance Coverage in Developing Countries’. We welcome submissions of abstracts or completed papers which explore the policy interventions for developing countries across the world to address the issue of limited health insurance coverage. While some nations have made significant progress toward comprehensive health insurance coverage, many in developing regions such Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and East Asia and the Pacific continue to face challenges, including limited resources, economic constraints, and the need for policy reforms to achieve universal health coverage.

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Suggested Themes

Submitting authors can prepare theoretical, empirical or applied policy papers and case studies relevant to any of the areas of enquiry below. Papers can utilise any methodology deemed appropriate but must reflect academic best practices. Final submissions should follow the journal submission guidelines of the International Review of Public Policy. Topics/themes of interest include but are not limited to:

1. Public policy interventions that have been successful in increasing health insurance coverage in developed or developing countries, and the lessons which can be drawn from these efforts.

2. Investigating the primary socioeconomic, cultural, or systemic barriers to health insurance coverage (such as income levels, rural versus urban disparities, and employment status) in these regions, and the policy measures which can address these challenges.

3. Emerging financing mechanisms, such as micro-insurance, community health funds, mobile-based health insurance, and digital health platforms, and how they can contribute to extending coverage to underserved populations.

4. The role that international agencies and private-sector partnerships can play in scaling effective health insurance programs and fostering collaborative approaches to address gaps, and the challenges are associated with these partnerships.

Who can submit

Contributions are invited from established and emerging scholars, public intellectuals, post-graduate students and public policy practitioners in the foregoing areas of enquiry.

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Session 1

Wednesday, July 2nd 13:45 to 15:45 (D5)

The political economy of health financing in Brazil: a cautionary tale

Alexandre Handfas (Fundação Getulio Vargas, Escola de Administração de Empresas de São Paulo)

Public Policy for Occupational and Environmental Health Equity: A Study of Health Insurance Coverage Among Street Vendors in Bhubaneswar, India.

Vaishali Singh (XIM University)

You Shall Not Pass: An Analysis of The Barriers and Solutions to Health Insurance Access in the Caribbean

Olvine Holas (JIPA Network LLC)

Gideon George (Eastern Caribbean Central Bank)

Addressing the Colonial Healthcare Hangover: Public Policy as a Tool to Boost Health Insurance Coverage in the ECCU

Dalano DaSouza (University of the West Indies, Five Islands Campus (Antigua and Barbuda))