

National Health Systems Face Fundamental Transformations

24 January 2013

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- Amid budgetary constraints, demographic changes and new delivery models, health systems will be undergoing profound changes
- The Sustainable Health Systems report defines three future health scenarios and offers strategies to achieve these transformations
- Deep-dive exploration studies have been conducted in the People ' s Republic of China, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain and England
- Read the [executive summary](#) or the [full report](#)

Davos-Klosters, Switzerland, 23 January 2013 – The World Economic Forum published a report on [Sustainable Health Systems](#) today, identifying how health systems of the future could be shaped. The report, prepared in cooperation with McKinsey & Company, is based on the assumption that health systems need to change fundamentally to become more sustainable. It contains three major parts: five country studies, three major strategic themes towards sustainable health systems and three contextual scenarios for 2040.

Health system sustainability is a universal issue, with many developed countries struggling to balance their books with constrained national budgets and developing countries investing to shape their systems for a better tomorrow.

In this context, the World Economic Forum has hosted this global effort including 200 experts from governments, industry and civil society to explore the question: what might health systems look like in 2040? The 30-year timeframe was chosen to allow participants to adopt a long-term perspective, shedding the constraints and roadblocks of day-to-day operations. The project included deep-dive exploration of future health systems in the People ' s Republic of China, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain and England.

“ The future of the German health system is critical for the nation to maintain its prominent and expanding role in the global economy. World Economic Forum brought together a diverse and exciting group of participants and created the right environment to start us on a path of creating an ambitious vision for the future health system in Germany. In my opinion, the pressing challenges for the future are to secure the financial basis of the health care system, to provide an adequate supply of skilled labour in health and long-term care, and to strengthen prevention. We already have taken important steps to cope with these challenges, but there is need for further reform measures in the time to come, ” said Daniel Bahr, Federal Minister of Health of Germany.

The burden of responsibility for health is broader than the healthcare sector, the report finds. A broad range of industries like media, food and beverage, high tech, urban planning and behavioural sciences are required to achieve the goal of a healthier population and sustainable health system.

“ We were impressed by the bold ideas set forth by such a diverse group, ” said Olivier Raynaud, Head of Healthcare Initiatives and Healthcare at the World Economic Forum. “ Participants were expanding the solution space beyond healthcare. ”

Visions for an ideal health system of 2040 were strikingly different from the national healthcare systems of today, with empowered patients, diverse and innovative delivery models, and new roles and stakeholders, incentives and norms. Strategies to reach the vision of a sustainable health system included embracing data and information to transform health and care, innovating healthcare delivery, and building healthy cities and countries of the future.

“ Health leaders need to recognize that future health systems will be influenced by a number of factors outside their control, ” said Kristel van der Elst, Head of Strategic Foresight at the World Economic Forum. The report describes six critical uncertainties that could have the greatest influence in shaping the context in which health systems develop and operate, including the public attitudes towards solidarity, options of governance, availability of health data and information systems, sources of health innovation, influence over lifestyles, and the prevalence of a health culture.

The scenarios provide a key insight – efficiency gains are necessary to move health systems towards greater sustainability, but need to be paired with a transformation in demand – building healthy individuals, cities, communities and countries.

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