

# Policy Briefing

## Topic 1: Addressing Differential Access to Healthcare Amongst Distinct Cultural Communities



### Outline:

1. Background
2. Current Examples of this Issue
3. Key Players
4. Questions to Consider
5. Useful Links

*\*Disclaimer: none of the below perspectives represent dais staff personal views and any perspectives brought up are for the purpose of generating discussion and providing starting points for debate/research.*

### Background:

A person's access to quality healthcare can be determined by their ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic background, and how each of these factors interact with a nation's existing healthcare system and sociopolitical environment. The disparities between average life expectancies of different communities within a population serve as a clear indicator of the population's inequitable distribution of healthcare services. This issue requires a multi-faceted resolution that can be adapted to ameliorate the unique way in which differential access to healthcare manifests itself in any given country.

Health disparities are defined as “Differences and/or gaps in the quality of health and healthcare across racial, ethnic, and socio-economic groups”<sup>1</sup>, or health inequities that are considered unnecessary, avoidable, and unjust<sup>2</sup>. These issues stem from an inability for the individual to access quality healthcare due to preexisting social norms and structures. In some states, privatized healthcare can widen the gap between healthcare opportunities provided to ethnic minorities when compared to the majority population. A common critique of privatized health care systems, such as that in the United States of America, is the “abundance of healthcare facilities, cutting edge technology, and pharmacotherapeutics and other assets . . . not accessible for a myriad of reasons to all segments of the population.”<sup>3</sup> Due to this inherent unequal access in privatized healthcare systems, these systems are more susceptible to systemic racism affecting the treatment an individual can afford and access. In a privatized healthcare system, citizens who pay for a higher stratum of healthcare insurance are prioritized, and healthcare providers will often delay or deny the treatment of those using a lower class of healthcare insurance. Privatized healthcare systems allow healthcare providers to choose who they treat - this allows the personal attitudes, values, and beliefs of a physician or doctor to influence the roster of patients that they treat. The policies and systems enforced by a government can also further amplify the inequitable distribution of services and necessities.

It is important to note the effect the Covid-19 pandemic has had on access to healthcare, specifically on the minorities and those of lesser socio-economic status. It is evident that the pandemic exposed the systemic imbalances and the ability for a crisis on the scale of Covid-19

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3540621/>

<sup>2</sup> [http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/43943/9789241563703\\_eng.pdf;jsessionid=1DF0828D0A08E123BC6A4C1CB1C5453E?sequence=1](http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/43943/9789241563703_eng.pdf;jsessionid=1DF0828D0A08E123BC6A4C1CB1C5453E?sequence=1)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3540621/>

to “exacerbate existing social vulnerabilities in society.”<sup>4</sup> Resolutions should do an ample job at addressing differential access to healthcare in all cases, while paying specific attention to global crises such as Covid-19 and its immediate effects.

However, the countless sources of inequity and the variety of affected populations highlights the complexity of this issue - thus, a satisfactory resolution will work to identify sources of inequity in each nation and address them. For more background, see the Heckler report which outlines the disparities in access to healthcare as well as its implications<sup>5</sup>.

## Key Perspectives

### *Developed Conservative Nations*

Many countries try to maintain traditional methods and practices over the years and limit the amount of change that occurs. These far-right states would argue that the onus is on the individual and not on the state to fund medical treatment - thus, developed conservative nations usually implement privatized healthcare systems as opposed to universal ones. Privatized healthcare systems run on an out-of-pocket basis, where the scope and quality of healthcare provided to the patient is dictated by their personal finances. In order to access healthcare, citizens are required to either pay for private health insurance or pay the healthcare system directly for the treatment they are provided. Privatized healthcare systems exist at a low cost to governments that implement them, but can be expensive and costly for individual citizens of these nations. Although these systems are not the most efficient at equitably distributing

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.bmj.com/content/372/bmj.n129>

<sup>5</sup> <https://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/assets/pdf/checked/1/ANDERSON.pdf>

healthcare based on need, they do provide some of the higher-earning individuals in a society with access to more efficient and personalized healthcare.

### *Developed Liberal Nations*

In a liberal perspective there are many countries that believe that in order to achieve harmony within a society, everyone must support one another. When it comes to healthcare, western liberal democracies tend to have systems in place in which the individual does not need to worry about healthcare expenditures. The cost of healthcare is taken up by society through universal health coverage; meaning that people have access to the healthcare services that they would need whenever and wherever they need them. Countries not only focus on what services are covered, but ensure that they are funded, managed and delivered so that everyone can benefit from it. These services are predominantly organized by the “needs and expectations of people and communities.”<sup>6</sup> Even in a liberal society, that ensures everyone get equal access to healthcare, there are long wait times for certain treatments which could cause hospitals to indirectly discriminate against minority groups such that a person that is a part of the majority population can get treatment first.

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<sup>6</sup> [https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/universal-health-coverage-\(uhc\)](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/universal-health-coverage-(uhc))

## Developing Nations

In less developed nations, poor urban planning serves to be a consistent source of inequality when analyzed on a global scale<sup>7</sup>. The role of bias and discrimination in access to healthcare specifically in hospitals located in regions of low income populations results in the lack of treatment for individuals of lower socioeconomic status<sup>8</sup>. Poor geographical access, or limited means of traveling to access quality healthcare, can be addressed by the implementation of better infrastructure in developing nations. Furthermore, some nations do not have the ability to establish and execute novel medical procedures in their facilities because they are so costly. Poor healthcare infrastructure results in easily-overwhelmed systems that are unable to adequately address the basic needs of citizens. These nations will support resolutions that provide them with the resources to implement the critically needed healthcare infrastructure.

### Key Players

- Doctors Without Borders- provide assistance to populations in distress regardless of their socioeconomic status
- UNICEF- United Nations Agency providing humanitarian and developmental aid to the most disadvantaged children and adolescents; protecting every child's right
- UNESCO- United Nations Agency aiming to promote world peace and acceptance cultural acceptance between nations
- World Vision- International humanitarian aid organization to help communities overcomes poverty and injustice
- Save the Children- an organization developed to improve the lives of children through better education, health care and economic opportunities

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<sup>7</sup><https://www.mcgill.ca/urbanplanning/planning#:~:text=What%20is%20urban%20planning%3F&text=Today%2C%20urban%20planning%20can%20be,enhancement%20of%20the%20natural%20environment.>

<sup>8</sup><https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4194634/>

## Questions to Consider:

1. How has Covid-19 affected the access to the healthcare system for different minority groups?
2. What role does the international community have in ensuring that everyone has access to affordable and quality healthcare?
  - a. Are these international groups present in your country?
3. How easily can citizens in your country access healthcare?
  - a. Is this due to discrimination against certain individuals or lack of quality healthcare in your nation overall?
4. How does underrepresentation in healthcare professionals affect differential access to healthcare?
5. What are some methods to lessen the socioeconomic disparity in access to healthcare?
6. What are the pros and cons of each of the current (conservative and liberal) healthcare ideologies?

## Useful Links:

1. Article on Health Disparities

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3540621/>

2. WHO document on Health Equity

[http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/43943/9789241563703\\_eng.pdf;jsessionid=1DF0828D0A08E123BC6A4C1CB1C5453E?sequence=1](http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/43943/9789241563703_eng.pdf;jsessionid=1DF0828D0A08E123BC6A4C1CB1C5453E?sequence=1)

3. Overview of Urban Planning

<https://www.mcgill.ca/urbanplanning/planning#:~:text=What%20is%20urban%20planning%3F&text=Today%2C%20urban%20planning%20can%20be,enhancement%20of%20the%20natural%20environment.>

4. Research on Understanding and Addressing Racial Disparities in Health Care

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4194634/>

5. The Heckler Report

<https://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/assets/pdf/checked/1/ANDERSON.pdf>

6. Covid-19 and the Social Determinants of Health

<https://www.bmj.com/content/372/bmj.n129>

7. Universal Health coverage

[https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/universal-health-coverage-\(uhc\)](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/universal-health-coverage-(uhc))

# Foreign Policy Briefing

## Topic 2: Controlling the Generation and Spread of Zoonotic Diseases



### Outline:

1. Background
2. Current Examples of this Issue
3. Key Players
4. Questions to Consider
5. Useful Links

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### Background:

Zoonoses are pathogens that involve the spread and transmission from animal to humans. There are many different ways that these pathogens can be spread: whether it be “through direct contact, food, water, or the environment”<sup>9</sup>, they pose an imminent threat to public health around the world. The increase in direct human and animal contact for domestic, agricultural, sport, or

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/zoonoses>

religious purposes all increase the likelihood of an initial spillover event occurring.<sup>10</sup> As there is a rise in factory farming and a focus on efficiency, there are fewer safety protocols being followed; this leads to an increased probability of spillover events that may result in small outbreaks in the population. Further human to human transmission, such as through contaminating food supply chains and air travel, give these diseases the potential to be devastating to the human population.

Most zoonotic disease outbreaks occur in “foods such as meat, eggs, dairy, or even some vegetables.”<sup>11</sup> Diseases such as HIV-1 emerged from chimpanzee bushmeat hunting and eventually spread to human hosts, other diseases such as the Nipah virus has a fruit bat host, which caused outbreaks in pig farms and ultimately to humans. Many of these diseases are spread abundantly in higher-income regions, where there are more meat and dairy products, highly urbanized areas, and areas that are sanitized poorly. Religion can also be a factor as it can “influence the kinds of foods people eat, how foods are prepared, and the demand for foods at particular times.”<sup>12</sup>

Zoonotic spillover has increased over three times the prior amount in the past decade<sup>13</sup>. A big contributor to this alarming number is the rates at which deforestation occurs. In low and middle income countries, little education about zoonotic transmission and less enforced regulation in livestock chains increase the risk of a spillover event occurring.<sup>14</sup> In the least developed countries about “20% of all human morbidity and mortality...[is] attributable to

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK215318/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/zoonoses>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK215318/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.understandinganimalresearch.org.uk/news/research-medical-benefits/the-increase-in-zoonotic-diseases-the-who-the-why-and-the-when/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11250-017-1460-z>



endemic zoonoses”, the spread of which is partly attributed to a lack of sanitation and access to healthcare.<sup>15</sup> To limit the increase in the spread of zoonotic diseases, it is important to limit the contact humans have with animals on any front, as 60% of emerging infectious diseases in humans are zoonotic in nature. Thus, deforestation forces animals out of their natural habitats and into situations where spillover occurs and the risk of infection drastically increases. It is worth noting that the development of vaccines takes a much longer time period than it takes for a disease to spread amongst a population, and thus it is important, and inexpensive, for nations to invest in the prevention of infectious diseases rather than deal with the consequences of a pandemic.<sup>16</sup>

Once an outbreak occurs, a rapid spread of a virus can be avoided through safe hygiene practices and ensuring that strict guidelines are being followed. Educating the population on methods of prevention by handwashing and the risk associated with the diseases can drastically reduce the spread. Furthermore, it is necessary that a state prevents the spread of misinformation amongst a population as the discourse surrounding diseases and prevention is an increasingly controversial topic. Otherwise, the spread of a virus can be accelerated by poor hygiene practices or the lack of defences utilized by the population such as the controversy surrounding masks in the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6522207/#cit0003>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.understandinganimalresearch.org.uk/news/research-medical-benefits/the-increase-in-zoonotic-diseases-the-who-the-why-and-the-when/>

## Current Examples of this Issue:

One example that everyone is facing all over the world is the current pandemic with Covid-19. Everyone's daily lives are affected by this such that activities that we were once able to do are now put on hold as the safety and well-being of all members of the world is important. As seen in the last two years, it is not easy to control the spread of the disease, but limiting the spread of the disease by following proper guidelines can reduce viral transmission. A good resolution will utilize the ongoing pandemic as a case for better preventing, controlling, and studying zoonotic diseases.

## Key Perspectives:

### *Liberal Perspective*

In terms of preventing the generation of zoonotic diseases, both the liberal and conservative perspectives believe it to be necessary to avoid human-animal contact that can lead to the transmission of zoonotic diseases. There is a global consensus that proper hygienic care must be taken when handling animals in factory farming as well as markets, however, conditions in developing countries are difficult to control as resources are scarce. This can result in improper handling of animals and thus the generation of zoonotic diseases in developing countries and later the spread of the disease. A proper resolution recognizes the difficulty some developing nations have with handling animals and the generation of zoonotic diseases, and takes that into consideration when analyzing how best to control and measure global zoonotic outbreaks.

According to the aforementioned research on the generation of zoonotic diseases, nations which have higher rates of deforestation in turn have a higher chance of generating zoonotic diseases as contact between animals and humans increases<sup>17</sup>. Thus, nations who have ample policies in terms of protecting the environment, preventing mass deforestation, and guarding wildlife play a greater role in preventing and controlling the spread of zoonotic diseases. A sufficient resolution will guide nations to invest in preventing the generation of diseases such as nations just mentioned.

The bigger difference between the liberal and conservative perspectives comes when a zoonotic disease is already generated and it comes to the control of the virus. This is evident in the ongoing pandemic as the discourse surrounding vaccinations and the utilization of masks to prevent transmission is a prevalent debate in contemporary politics. Liberal nations hold the view that wearing masks and vaccinations are necessary measures to reduce the spread of zoonotic diseases like Covid-19 and therefore governments base policies on this belief. Furthermore, liberal nations are in favour of regional lockdowns to contain the spread of viruses as in extreme cases other measures are not sufficient enough. A common critique of this perspective is that a loss of freedom is observed amongst society yet proponents of the liberal perspective would argue that this is a necessary course of action to protect society from the disease. A sufficient resolution will take into account the ideologies of all nations when determining policies to enact that can ensure that the primary goal is to prevent zoonotic outbreaks on a global scale.

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<sup>17</sup><https://www.understandinganimalresearch.org.uk/news/research-medical-benefits/the-increase-in-zoonotic-diseases-the-who-the-why-and-the-when/>

## Conservative Perspective

As mentioned prior, both liberal and conservative perspectives align in terms of preventing the generation of diseases. However, proponents of a conservative perspective will have issues surrounding the loss of liberty when a government makes it necessary to take preventative measures such as wearing masks and mandatory vaccinations. Furthermore, they would argue that regional lockdowns are inherently wrong as those who are worried about contracting the disease can stay home on their own terms rather than making it a legal condition. When drafting a resolution, it is necessary to take into consideration all perspectives surrounding the issue and enact policies that avoid controversy as much as possible. Otherwise, the spread of misinformation and debate surrounding the topic will take higher priority in the media than actual methods of preventing the spread of a disease and therefore the priority of controlling zoonotic diseases will be ignored.

### Active Players:

- World Health Organization: Actively sets out guidelines for preventing the generation and spread of zoonotic diseases as well as playing a crucial role in measuring and identifying the number of cases globally.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): A national agency in the USA which works in preventing disease, injury, and disability in the USA as well as globally.
- Doctors Without Borders: Play a role in delivering medical aid to people who would have a lack of care otherwise. This includes nations stricken by pandemics without the resources to aid individuals and control the spread.

## Questions to Consider:

1. What are some more methods that prevent zoonotic diseases?
  - a. How can we further educate the population regarding these diseases that occur and what is the most effective method?
2. What does your state believe in the measure that one should take to prevent the spread?
  - a. Should there be lockdowns, circuit-breakers, mandatory vaccines?
  - b. Does religion play a role in deciding if so how?
3. Should there be universal guidelines that each country needs to follow?
  - a. Are countries allowed more freedom of choosing or should we take into account the greater good of public health?
4. What are some pros and cons of the liberal and conservative aspects the prevention of diseases?

## Useful Links:

1. Zoonoses Key Points

<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/zoonoses>

2. Emergence of Zoonotic Diseases

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK215318/>

3. Increase and Trends of Zoonotic Diseases

<https://www.understandinganimalresearch.org.uk/news/research-medical-benefits/the-increase-in-zoonotic-diseases-the-who-the-why-and-the-when/>

4. More Information on Zoonotic Diseases and Case Study

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11250-017-1460-z>

5. Case study of Zoonotic Diseases in Nigeria

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6522207/#cit0003>