Chapter 7
Challenges and Opportunities of the Sustainability in Healthcare: Multicriteria Assessment of Polish Healthcare Sector

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ABSTRACT

Public health, affecting the operations of the entity and its environment, plays an important role in the concept of sustainable development. Health condition affects the quality of life of the individual thus the condition of the economy. Taking into consideration the complex relationship of public health and the concept of Sustainable Development Goals, the analysis seems to be fully justified. The aim of the analysis is to determine challenges and opportunities of the sustainability of selected United Nations Member States healthcare sectors. Particular emphasis in the analysis was placed on the situation of the Polish sector against the background of the analyzed countries. The analysis was based on the Sustainable Development Goals and was carried out using one of the MCDA method.

INTRODUCTION

The health condition of the population and access to healthcare are fundamental factors determining the people’s lives, which are pointed out in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The multifaceted nature of relations between public health and the concept of sustainable development is manifested in such aspects as improving the quality of life, efficiency and costs of the functioning of the economy or the impact of the environment on society’s health. Sustainable socio-economic development is one of the most important challenges of the modern world and that is why it requires evaluating systems and implementing measures along with appropriate budget planning. The aim of the analysis is to determine

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challenges and opportunities of the sustainability of selected United Nations Member States healthcare sectors. Particular emphasis in the analysis was placed on the situation of the Polish sector against the background of the analyzed countries. The methods of measuring efficiency are an appropriate tool for detecting not only efficiency or lack of it, but also showing good practices, on which inefficient units should model themselves.

BACKGROUND

The health condition of the population and access to health care are fundamental factors determining the quality of life. The primary focus of health care should be put on optimizing patient outcomes (Harris, Green, Ramsey, Allen, & King, 2017), but without due consideration of value for money healthcare systems will not be sustainable (Garner & Littlejohns, 2011; Scott, 2012). There are many challenges of the sustainability of healthcare services presented in the literature (Leeder, 2013; Stuart & Adams, 2007).

All of them threaten the ability to maintain health services at acceptable standards and as a consequence in a sustainable way. Sustainability is defined here as the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Shah, 2008). The multifaceted nature of this relationship manifests itself in such aspects as the improvement of the quality of life, the efficiency and costs of the functioning of the economy or the impact of the environment on the health of the society. As Sustainable Development Commission underlines the concept of the sustainable development is an approach to development that looks to balance different needs against the awareness of the environmental, social and economic limitations (Sustainable Development Commission, 2011).

Sustainable socio-economic development is one of the most important challenges of the modern world, and by many countries, including Poland, it is considered the Constitutional Principle of the Republic of Poland.

In the global perspective, the overarching organization dealing with sustainable development is the UN. During the work done, at many cyclical conferences, on the idea of sustainable development, the goals of sustainable development have been distinguished. The Sustainable Development Goals were developed to mobilize efforts in all countries to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change, while ensuring that no one is left behind. The goals apply universally and are part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (EPF, 2019).

As it was mentioned above, health is inextricably linked to the concept of sustainable development. Equitable access to health care for all is undoubtedly a benchmark, recognized in the Millennium Development Goals and its follow-on, the recently announced Sustainable Development Goals (Wong, 2016). The interconnectedness of the SDGs is clear. Hence, the importance of healthy lives and well-being for all (Goal 3) is unquestionable as it is interlinked with ending poverty and hunger (Goals 1 & 2), reducing inequalities (Goal 10), providing clean water and sanitation facilities (Goal 6), protecting the environment (Goals 7, 13, 14, 15), providing decent work (Goal 8), ensuring gender equality (Goal 5) and having access to quality education (Goal 4). (Wong, 2016)

With reference to the idea of Sustainable Development Goals Hertwig and Grune-Yanoff (2017) have underlined in their research that numerous governments and organizations have begun to acknowledge the huge potential of behavioral science in improving the efficiency of public policies. What is more, the behavioral science is being considered to become a powerful policy tool in the great majority of OECD countries. The growing popularity of behavioral science owes the nudge approach, which has