

# The Nation's Health

EIGHTH EDITION

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**Production Credits**

Publisher: Michael Brown  
Associate Editor: Catie Heverling  
Editorial Assistant: Teresa Reilly  
Associate Production Editor: Kate Stein  
Production Assistant: Rebekah Linga  
Senior Marketing Manager: Sophie Fleck  
Manufacturing and Inventory Control Supervisor: Amy Bacus  
Composition: Auburn Associates, Inc.  
Cover Design: Scott Moden  
Photo Research and Permissions Manager: Kimberly Potvin  
Assistant Photo Researcher: Emily Howard  
Cover Image: © Olga Bogatyrenko/Shutterstock, Inc.  
Printing and Binding: Malloy, Inc.  
Cover Printing: Malloy, Inc.

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

The nation's health. — 8th ed. / [edited by] Leiyu Shi and Douglas A. Singh.

p. ; cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN-13: 978-0-7637-8457-7 (pbk.)

ISBN-10: 0-7637-8457-5 (pbk.)

1. Public health—United States. 2. Medical care—United States. 3. Medical policy—United States. 4. Health care reform—United States. 5. Health status indicators—United States. I. Shi, Leiyu. II. Singh, Douglas A., 1946-

[DNLM: 1. Public Health—trends—United States. 2. Delivery of Health Care—United States. 3. Epidemiologic Factors—United States. 4. Health Policy—United States. 5. Health Status—United States. 6. Socioeconomic Factors—United States. WA 100 N2841 2011]

RA445.N36 2011

362.10973—dc22

2010017559

6048

Printed in the United States of America

14 13 12 11 10 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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# Preface

Arguments over the health of Americans as a society have often focused on unequal access to medical care services by virtue of either having or not having insurance coverage. However, a nation's health is the outcome of multiple determinants that interact in complex ways at both the individual and population levels. This Eighth Edition of *The Nation's Health* evaluates health and well-being from this broad perspective.

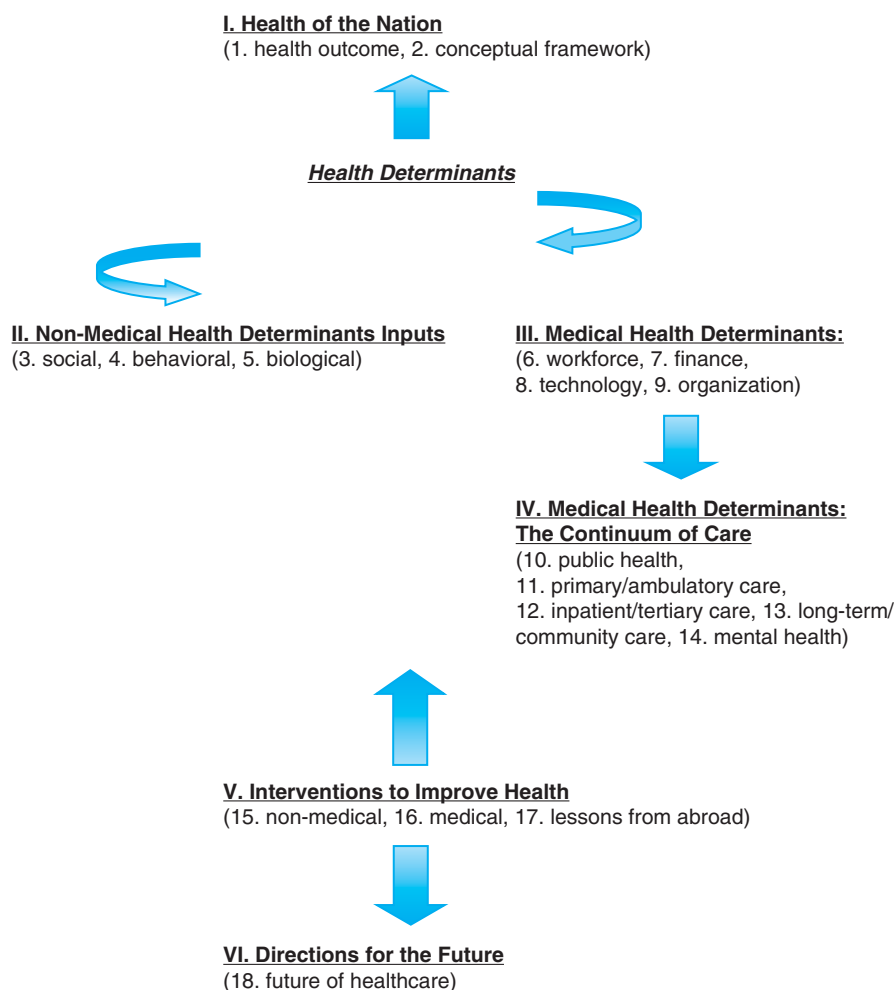
On March 21, 2010, the House Democrats in the United States Congress passed, without bipartisan support, the final version of the Patient Protection and Affordable Health Care Act, commonly referred to as the "Health Care Reform Bill." On March 24, President Obama signed it into law. It is expected that the new law will extend health insurance coverage to an additional 32 million uninsured Americans, provide subsidies to help individuals purchase health insurance, mandate the coverage of pre-existing conditions, and provide billions of dollars of funding for public health and preventive activities. However, the law does not go into effect until 2014. Over half of the American people opposed this bill as too ambitious and too costly, and at the time of this writing, over one third of the states have threatened to mount a legal challenge over the constitutionality of this law. Hence, its final outcome remains somewhat uncertain. Even assuming its legal vindication, the effects of this legislation on the nation's health and economic sustainability are uncertain. As stated earlier, factors other than medical care have a significant effect on health and well-being. Secondly, even though access to timely medical services is an important factor, without a robust infrastructure of primary and preventive care, universal health insurance coverage can do little to improve the nation's health. From an economic

standpoint, no one in their right mind believes that expanding health insurance to several million people will save money unless the government nationalizes the entire health care system, enforces massive rationing of health care services, and imposes severe limits on payments to providers. Only the latter half of the next decade will begin to reveal whether the unusual political maneuvers employed by the Democrats in pushing the reform bill through Congress will turn out to be a good deal or a bad one for the nation as a whole.

In the meantime, the objectives of this new edition are to highlight the major accomplishments and limitations in health, identify and analyze the major determinants of health, and suggest interventions to positively impact the determinants of health. To accomplish these objectives and to organize the 18 chapters and 72 independent readings in this book, we have developed a framework, illustrated in Figure 1.

The book is organized into six parts that reflect a comprehensive framework of health determinants. The first two chapters contained in Part I, "Health of the Nation," provide a glimpse into the state of the nation's health and the dominant models of health determinants. Chapter 1, "Health Outcomes," explains the main health outcomes and includes readings on health outcome measurement, health status of the United States population, achievements and progress made over time, and international comparisons. Chapter 2, "Conceptual Framework of Health Determinants," covers the most dominant frameworks on health determinants as found in current literature.

In Part II, "The Determinants of Health," three chapters explain the non-medical determinants of health. Chapter 3, "Social Determinants of Health," looks at the non-medical social determinants of



**Figure 1** Framework of Health Determinants and Organization of the Book.

health, including socioeconomic, political, economic, and environmental factors. Chapter 4, “Behavioral Determinants of Health,” includes the non-medical behavioral determinants, such as cultural factors. In Chapter 5, “Biological Determinants of Health,” the non-medical biological determinants, such as, genetics, aging, and certain internal factors are highlighted.

In Part III, “Medical Health Determinants: Inputs,” three chapters are included that demonstrate the medical determinants of health from an input/resources perspective. Chapter 6, “The Health Workforce,” looks at the medical determinants of health, specifically the role of health workforce. Chapter 7, “Health Care Financing,” is based on the close relationship between health insurance, access to and utilization of health care, reimbursement to providers for services delivered, and health care expenditures. Chapter 8, “Medical Technology,” addresses the role

of medical technology that includes equipment, pharmaceuticals, and information systems.

Part IV, “Medical Health Determinants: The Continuum of Care,” includes six chapters that demonstrate the medical determinants of health from a process/services continuum perspective. Chapter 9, “Organization of Health Care,” points to the complexities of the United States health care delivery system, the role of managed care, care coordination, and patient activation and involvement in medical care. Chapter 10, “The Public Health System,” looks at the medical determinants of health, specifically the public health continuum of care. Chapter 11, “Primary Care,” covers the primary and ambulatory care continuum. Chapter 12, “Inpatient and Tertiary Care,” incorporates inpatient hospital services, physician-owned specialty hospitals, and critical care. Chapter 13, “Long-Term and Community Care,”

covers senior housing and long-term care services. Chapter 14, “Mental Health Care,” provides an overview of mental health care, including trends, issues related to race and ethnicity, and managed care carve-outs for mental health services.

The three chapters in Part V, “Interventions to Improve Health,” illustrate targeted medical and non-medical interventions that can be developed to positively influence the determinants of health. Chapter 15, “Non-Medical Interventions,” looks at the non-medical interventions to improve health including political, regulatory, socioeconomic, behavioral, cultural, community, and environmental factors. Chapter 16, “Medical Interventions,” reports on the status of quality initiatives in the delivery of health care. Chapter 17, “Lessons from Abroad,” considers interventions used in other countries including examples of representative health care systems around the world, and approaches to address health determinants and improving population health in selected countries.

Part VI, “Directions for the Future,” provides a glimpse into the future. Chapter 18, “The Future of Health Care Delivery,” sheds some light on why in the recent passage of health reform, solutions to health care problems are being imposed upon the public and the professionals by ambitious politicians and bureaucrats. How to deliver health care cost effectively will be a growing challenge for the United States and other developed countries.

Each chapter begins with a discussion of the major issues and challenges pertinent to the main theme of that chapter, followed by summaries of the four readings included in that chapter. This will help readers clearly grasp the essential elements related to that chapter and understand the main objectives of each of the selected readings.

In selecting the readings for the book, we struck a balance between classic readings and new readings published within the last five years. We included not only articles published in peer-reviewed journals, but also excerpts from government and organizational reports. Efforts were made to include international articles. It is to be understood that the selected readings in no way provide a comprehensive cover-

age of the chapter themes or capture all the important works in a given field. They are meant to illustrate the various themes within the scope of the book.

As an enhancement over the previous editions, this edition expands its scope by incorporating readings pertaining to health care delivery and interventions undertaken in other countries of the world. The United States can learn useful lessons from these countries. This book can be used either as a stand-alone text in courses dealing with health care policy or challenges and issues in health care, or it can be used to supplement materials covered in our two other related textbooks: *Delivering Healthcare in America: A Systems Approach and Essentials of the U.S. Health Care System*.

As a teaching aid for instructors, the book is accompanied by an Instructor’s Manual that includes discussion/exam questions. The manual includes suggested answers in bulleted format.

We appreciate the work of our research assistants Angeli Bueno and Krista Beckwith who provided assistance with literature review and synthesis of materials on selected portions of the book. The views expressed are those of the authors only and do not necessarily reflect those of our institutions. As in the past, we invite comments from our readers. Communications can be directed to either or both authors:

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