

# ESSENTIALS OF THE **U.S. Health Care System**



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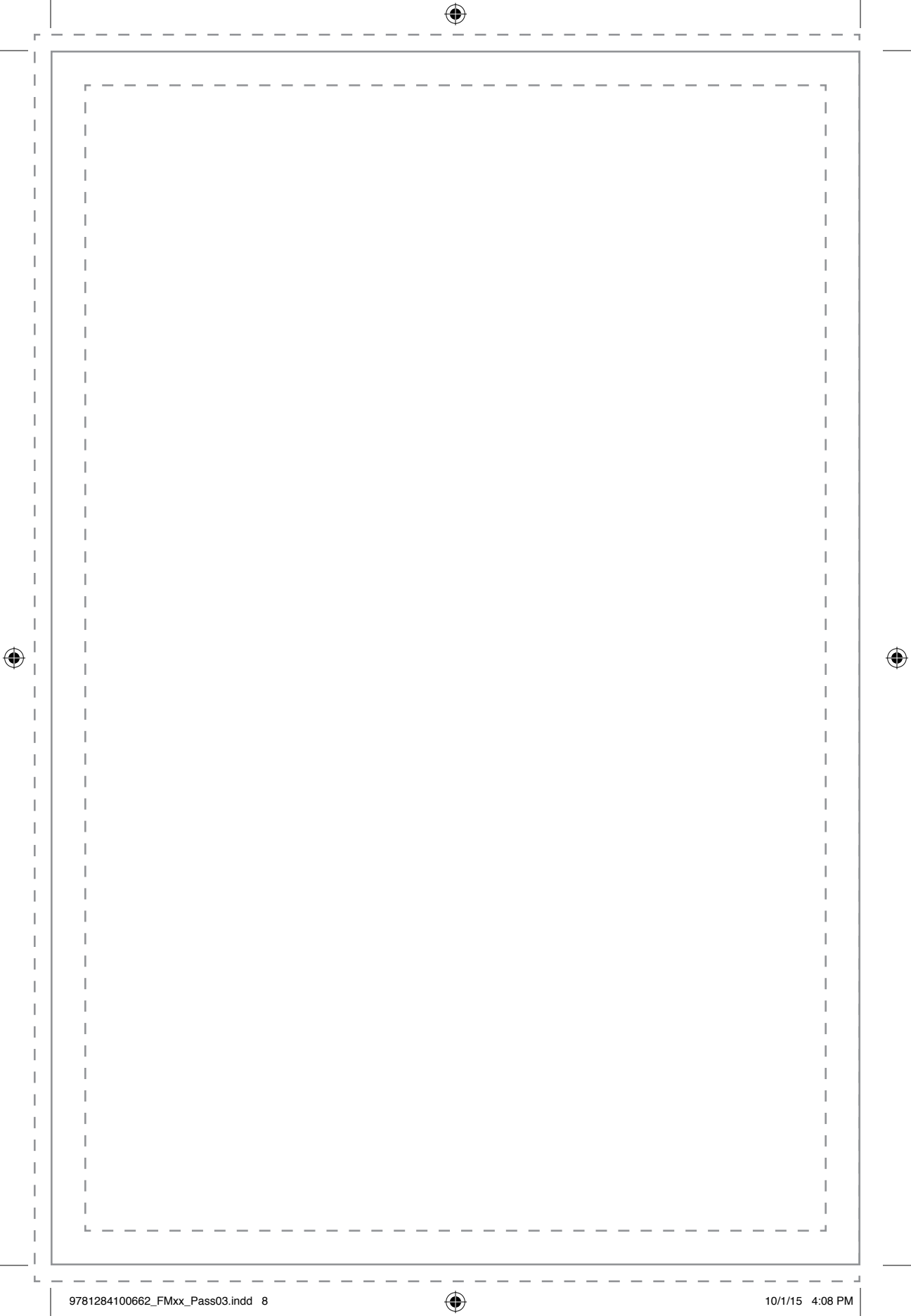
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# Preface

This text is a condensed and simplified version of our standard textbook on the U.S. health care system, *Delivering Health Care in America: A Systems Approach, 6th Edition*, which has been widely used for teaching both undergraduate and graduate courses. While retaining the main themes of the larger book, this version covers the essential elements of U.S. health care in an easier to read format. This text leaves out much of the data and technical details found in the expanded version. Remaining comprehensive and focused, this condensed version is designed for maximum accessibility and flexibility.

This text retains the systems model to organize the major themes of U.S. health care delivery. The first three chapters lay the foundation that is necessary for understanding the U.S. health care delivery system, which is distinct from any other system in the world. “Major Characteristics of U.S. Health Care Delivery” (Chapter 1) gives an overview of U.S. health care and contrasts the American system with the three most commonly used models of health care delivery in other advanced nations, such as Canada, the United Kingdom, and Germany. “Foundations of U.S. Health Care Delivery” (Chapter 2) explains the different models for understanding health and its determinants. In the context of American beliefs and values, this chapter also discusses the issue of equity using the concepts of market justice and social justice and explains how health services are rationed in both market justice—and social justice—based systems. “Historical Overview of U.S. Health Care Delivery” (Chapter 3) traces the history of U.S. health care from colonial times to the present and includes an added section on health care reform. The key to understanding the nature of the

current health care system and its likely future direction is to understand its evolutionary past. This chapter also includes current trends in corporatization, information revolution, and globalization as they pertain to health care delivery.

The next three chapters are about the resources—both human and non-human—employed in delivering health care. “Health Care Providers and Professionals” (Chapter 4) addresses the roles played by some of the major types of personnel in health care delivery. It also discusses some key issues pertaining to the number and distribution of physicians and the effect these factors have on the delivery of health care. “Technology and Its Effects” (Chapter 5) discusses medical technology and the various issues related to its development and dissemination. “Financing and Reimbursement Methods” (Chapter 6) explains the concept of health insurance, the major private and public health insurance programs in the United States, and methods of reimbursing providers.

The next five chapters describe the system processes, beginning with outpatient and primary care services (discussed in Chapter 7). Hospitals are the focus of Chapter 8. “Managed Care and Integrated Systems” (Chapter 9) examines managed care and integrated organizations, such as integrated delivery systems and the emerging accountable care organizations, as well as the different types of arrangements found in integrated organizations. “Long-Term Care Services” (Chapter 10) explores the meaning and scope of long-term care and provides an overview of community-based and institution-based long-term care services. “Populations with Special Health Needs” (Chapter 11) highlights vulnerable populations and their special health care needs. This chapter also includes a section on mental health.

The next two chapters deal with the main outcomes of the health care system and the ways in which those outcomes are addressed through health policy. The main outcomes associated with health care are presented in Chapter 12, “Cost, Access, and Quality.” “Health Policy” (Chapter 13) gives an overview of health policy, including the major participants in its development and the process by which it is created, in the United States.

Finally, “The Future of Health Services Delivery” (Chapter 14) explores the future of health care in the United States in the context of forces of future change, health care reform, conflicting issues of cost and access, future models of care delivery, global challenges, and technological innovations.

For easy reference, an Appendix—“Essentials of the Affordable Care Act” is found at the end of the 14 chapters. It provides a topical summary of the ACA.

Leiyu Shi  
Douglas A. Singh

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## New in the Fourth Edition

This edition has been updated with the latest health statistics and pertinent information available at the time the manuscript was prepared. Some key additions to the text include the following:

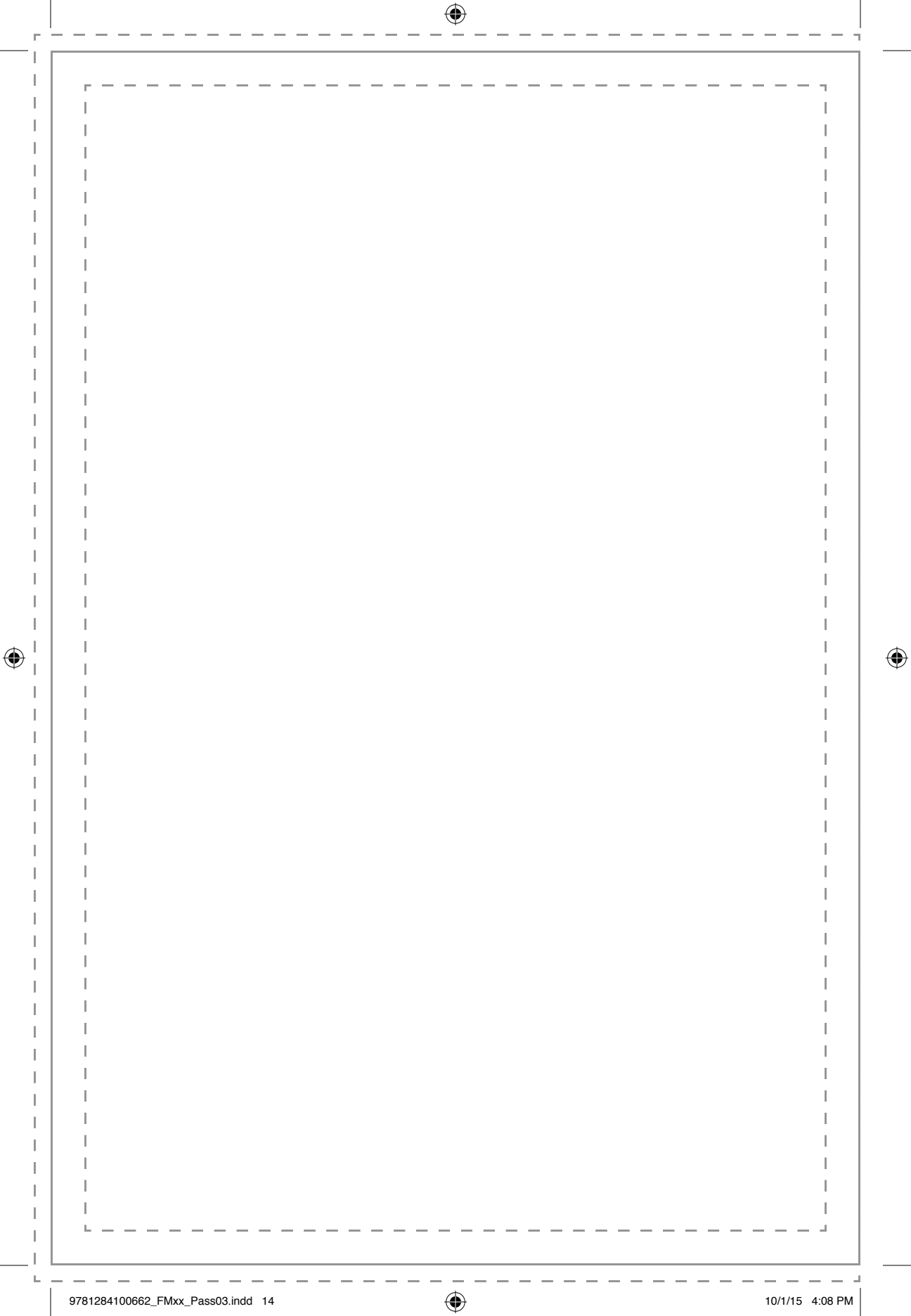
- Current status of managed care and integrated delivery system under the Affordable Care Act; current status of public health system; health care reform in selected countries (Chapter 1)
- Implementation of *Healthy People 2020*; assessment of the Healthy People initiative (Chapter 2)
- New sections: “Era of Health Care Reform” and “U.S. Health Care Today” discuss the current state of affairs in the context of historical developments (Chapter 3).
- Current U.S. physician workforce and challenges (Chapter 4)
- Addition of nanomedicine; clinical decision support systems; Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) Act; update on remote monitoring; regulation of biologics; and the ACA and medical technology (Chapter 5)
- New sections: “The Affordable Care Act and Private Insurance”; “The Affordable Care Act and Public Insurance”; “The Affordable Care Act and Payment Reform” (Chapter 6)
- Community health centers’ current scope, efficacy/values, and challenges (Chapter 7)
- Discussion on the performance of church-owned hospitals and physician-owned hospitals; new section: “The Affordable Care Act and Hospitals” (Chapter 8)
- Update on accountable care organizations; new section: “Managed Care and Organizational Integration Under the Affordable Care Act” (Chapter 9)

- New section: “The Affordable Care Act and Long-Term Care” (Chapter 10)
- Current disparities in literature (racial, socioeconomic status) in terms of access to care, quality of care, and health outcomes; programs (national, regional, local) that address disparities (racial, socioeconomic status) in terms of access to care, quality of care, and health outcomes (Chapter 11)
- Quality initiatives both from government (e.g., Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality) and private sectors and programs to contain health care costs (Chapter 12)
- Update health policy issues and challenges after ACA (Chapter 13)
- New section discusses the future of U.S. health care delivery in the context of forces of future change; challenges of coverage, access, and cost and future of health care reform—including prospects for a single-payer system—in the context of the Affordable Care Act; new section on care delivery of the future (Chapter 14)



# Acknowledgments

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