

# The Conceptual Basis for Excellence in Health Management: Efficiency, Sustainability, and Equity

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## ABSTRACT

The effective functioning of health services depends on the practice of healthcare management, which includes direction, administration, and leadership in healthcare organizations. By combining the concepts of public health and health policy, "health management" goes beyond healthcare administration. The European Health Management Association (EHMA) carried out this study to create a unified definition of health management because it is widely practiced but not universally acknowledged. This study proposed a comprehensive definition of health management that incorporates social, environmental, and economic determinants of health, cross-sector collaboration, and the "One Health" approach. It was developed using a qualitative methodology that included focus group discussions and validation through quantitative expert interviews. The release of this unified definition has significant ramifications for health outcomes, policy formation, and professional training. It gives courses a solid foundation, guides the creation of precise policies, and encourages excellence in the provision of health services that are equitable, sustainable, and efficient.

**Keywords:** health management, public health, health policy, healthcare.

## INTRODUCTION

The practice of giving leadership, administration, and guidance to healthcare organizations and their many internal components is known as "healthcare management." It is widely acknowledged that the three main tenets of healthcare administration are equity, efficiency, and effectiveness. The seven primary tasks that healthcare managers usually perform are planning, organizing, staffing, regulating, directing, risk assessment, and decision-making. These roles are essential for improving patient care quality, organizational effectiveness, and financial sustainability (Hennink, 2022).

Several professional groups have been able to identify as "healthcare managers" thanks to a precise and well-defined definition of the term. Medical directors, clinical managers, nursing home administrators, and laboratory managers are just a few examples (Fennell, 2021).

A specific professional specialty that goes beyond conventional healthcare administration is required in order to completely incorporate a more comprehensive view of health into more equitable and sustainable health systems. In order to address the underlying social and environmental determinants of health, this specialty must integrate concepts from public health, health policy development, and governance systems. Although many health system professionals are already involved in this type of work, whether in government health departments, civil society organizations, or research institutes, the field is not well defined or has a unified identity (Burtis, 2021).

In addition to improving and standardizing practices through shared understanding and offering clear guidance for scientific efforts aimed at enhancing their professional capacity, an accredited, published definition of "health management" would help health managers develop a shared professional identity (Linnander, 2017).

For the purpose of directing the development of professional training, policies, and health systems that support equity, sustainability, and efficiency, a precise definition of health management is also essential. Since it is the cornerstone of a broader framework that can improve health systems' ability to handle the difficulties of the current complex global health landscape, such as pandemics, climate change, and health inequalities, the European Health Management Association (EHMA) started this study to develop such a definition.

## METHODS

In order to create and validate a thorough definition of health management, EHMA conducted this study under the direction of its Board of Directors and Scientific Advisory Committee. It used a qualitative research methodology that included focus groups and interviews with well-known managers and leaders in the health sector. In accordance with scientific best practices, the technique was split into two phases: a validation phase that involved expert interviews and focus group discussions to improve a preliminary working definition.

### Definition of Health Management

The process of offering direction and leadership to support and advance health at the individual, organizational, and systemic levels is what we refer to as health management. A holistic view of health that acknowledges the impact of environmental, social, and behavioral factors is embraced by health management. Health management include primary, secondary, tertiary, and community care, as well as traditional healthcare management. However, it goes beyond care settings. Health management, which is in line with the "One health" paradigm, integrates human, animal, digital, and environmental health considerations to promote synergy with associated policy and societal domains (Thompson, 2016).

Any individual who practices health management can be regarded as a health manager, regardless of their level of education, title, or professional role. Through the application of specialized knowledge, formal training, and ethical standards, health managers lead, coordinate, and optimize health systems. They also create a shared societal vision for optimal health, foster multi-institutional collaboration across the public and private sectors, improve health policy advocacy, and establish effective governance structures that improve the performance of health organizations and professionals. Given the vital roles they play, health managers ought to be more widely acknowledged as a unique professional category that can be the focus of specialized training programs and certifications.

### Sustainability and Healthy System Efficiency

The ability of health systems to continue operating effectively over an extended period of time, despite environmental, social, and economic constraints, is referred to as sustainability in health management. Efficiency, which refers to the best possible use of financial, human, and technological resources to maximize health outcomes while minimizing waste, is the guiding concept that makes sustainability possible (Davis, 2013).

### Equity in the Health System

Another important implication of the suggested definition is equity in health systems. Addressing health disparities that result from unequal access to care and the unequal distribution of social determinants of health, such as poverty, housing, and education, is a growing responsibility for health systems.

### Governance and Policy Development

From a policy standpoint, the definition offers a framework that can direct the creation of equitable and long-lasting health policies. This definition can be used by policymakers to create precise guidelines for integrating health management practices that address economic, social, environmental, and digital determinants of health. For health policy to be in line with more general international goals like the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN, this will be crucial (Arah o, 2003; Walshe, 2011).

Policymakers can, for instance, create rules requiring health systems to track and report on their environmental effect, encourage the use of green technologies, and guarantee the sustainability of healthcare delivery models. Furthermore, this definition can assist health authorities in developing performance criteria that evaluate healthcare systems' equity and sustainability in addition to their clinical efficacy. These indicators can encourage stronger cross-sector interdisciplinary collaboration, improved service accessibility, and a decrease in environmental impact( Fennell, 2021).

Furthermore, this definition endorses governance frameworks that promote co-design and co-production models, in which communities and other stakeholders actively engage in the process of making decisions. More equitable health outcomes result from health systems that are more responsive to population demands thanks to this participatory approach. In order to promote governance models that facilitate cross-sector collaboration and guarantee that the policies put into place are equitable, inclusive, and long-lasting, health managers are essential( Stewart, 2014).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In the context of sustainability, equity, and cross-sector collaboration, the concept of health management put out here has important ramifications for the administration, governance, and organization of health systems. It provides a conceptual framework for health management that incorporates One Health principles and

emphasizes the creation of effective, equitable, and sustainable health systems. It also supports excellence in practice and policymaking in ways that can enhance system resilience and health outcomes.

1. Complex issues including how environmental degradation (such as pollution and climate change) can directly affect human health and put a strain on healthcare resources, as well as how the governance of digital technologies in healthcare can either exacerbate or lessen health disparities, must be taken into account by health managers. Additionally, by encouraging effective resource management, health managers may guarantee that health systems utilize the financial, human, and ecological resources they depend on in a sustainable manner. This entails developing policies that promote the sustainable use of energy, water, and other vital resources in healthcare settings, lowering the carbon footprint of healthcare institutions, and organizing for sustainable medical product supply chains.
2. Health managers can guarantee that the health system tackles the entire spectrum of social and environmental causes that lead to health disparities by collaborating across sectors. In order to ensure that the opinions of people most impacted by health disparities are represented, health managers can also promote inclusive decision-making procedures that include community members in the planning and assessment of health services.
3. The new notion of health management has consequences for population health outcomes. Health management can assist address the underlying causes of many avoidable diseases by advocating for a comprehensive strategy that takes into account social and environmental factors. Health managers can promote long-lasting and extensive improvements in population health by integrating sustainability and equity into routine health management procedures. This will address not only urgent healthcare needs but also the upstream factors that influence health outcomes.
4. Training and education in the health industry are also significantly impacted by the incorporation of sustainability and One Health principles into health management. According to the revised definition of health management, courses should focus on public health, policy formation, environmental science, and social justice in addition to healthcare administration. In addition to managing hospitals and other healthcare facilities, health managers must be knowledgeable about the larger framework within which health systems function, especially with regard to the social and environmental determinants of health. Furthermore, these programs should prioritize cross-sector collaboration training since, in order to establish comprehensive health care, health managers will increasingly need to collaborate with environmental agencies, agricultural stakeholders, urban planners, IT administrators, educators, and public health organizations.

## CONCLUSION

The study's definition of health management has broad ramifications for how health systems around the world will grow in the future. It offers the cornerstone of a conceptual framework that supports equitable, sustainable, and effective health systems capable of handling the intricate problems brought on by contemporary health emergencies. This definition paves the way for health systems to become more resilient, flexible, and inclusive by incorporating One Health principles and emphasizing the social and environmental determinants of health. With the resources, expertise, and sense of community this new definition offers, health managers will be in a better position to spearhead the shift in our health systems toward more sustainability, efficiency, and equity, which will ultimately improve everyone's health outcomes.

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