

Cost-sharing or Lost Caring? An Analysis of the Perception of Residents of Eldoret City on Private Hospitals & Clinics in Kenya

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With the introduction of the now infamous Structural Adjustment Programs, the Health-care Systems of many countries in the South suffered great impacts due to the massive cuts in health-care and medical subsidies. One of the effects was the introduction of Cost-Sharing for hitherto free medical treatment at government-owned health facilities. Whilst the measures may have been well-intentioned, the effects on the common man, especially considering that a substantial proportion of the population of Kenya live under poverty, have continued to impoverish them.

Cuts in health sector and fund-raising mechanisms were instituted through stabilization and adjustment measures (Rist, 2002), but the ripple effects are still being felt today. Although the MDGs, just less than five years away from the deadline, aim at substantially reducing maternal and child deaths, it may be a feat hard to attain with the current state of affairs. The expected deterioration in conditions at public hospitals gave rise to the emergence of private clinics, some of which are better-equipped. However, not all have access to the sometimes better facilities used in these private clinics. The deterioration in public hospitals coupled with the heavy burden of sharing medical costs led to lack of caring attitudes.

This paper accrues from a survey of adults in Eldoret city categorised into three socio-economic classes. It investigates their perception of private medical practice and clinics and how these affect decisions at household, family or other level. It examines the role of private clinics and the interplay between these, and social attitudes in creating disparities in medical access across social classes. It discusses how the government is addressing these gaps.

Key words: Structural Adjustment, cost-sharing, private clinics/practice.

Reference

Rist, G. (2002). *The History of Development. From Western Origins to Global Faith*. London: Zed Books.