

Japan

Summary

In the Japanese health care system, healthcare services are provided by national and local governments. Payment for personal medical services is offered through a mandatory universal health care insurance system that provides relative equality of access, with fees set by a government committee. People without insurance through employers can participate in a national health insurance program administered by local governments.

Management

- The healthcare system is highly regulated by the government.

Doctors and Hospitals

- Healthcare providers are predominantly private.
- Providers are paid directly by insurers.
- All doctors are paid the same fee for each service.
- About 80 percent of hospitals are private and physician-owned. By law, hospitals must operate as not-for-profit entities.
- About 20 percent of hospitals are large, public, state-owned teaching hospitals.

Role of Employer

- Employers pay from 50 to 80 percent of the cost of health insurance for employees.
- Individuals are assigned a health insurer according to their employment situation.

Role of Individual

- In addition to contributing the cost of the premium, individuals pay between 20 and 30 percent of their health care costs through co-payments.

Role of Government

- The government funds the National Health Insurance system which insures the unemployed, elderly, and self-employed (including lawyers and doctors).

Who decides Benefits and Service?

- Health insurers are required, by law, to offer a basic package of benefits (including medical consultation, drugs, and other materials; medical treatment, surgery, and other services; home care treatment and nursing; and hospitalization and nursing at medical institutions).

Universal Coverage

- By law, everyone must pay into health insurance plans until retirement. After retirement, contribution payments for state-regulated plans stop but coverage is continued until death.
- The government covers health insurance contributions for the unemployed and those with low income.

Financing

- 53 percent of health care costs are covered by insurance, 32.3 percent by the government, and 14.8 percent by patients' co-payments.

Health Care Insurance Premiums

- Individuals and their dependents pay premiums (about 8.5 percent of their salary) and co-payments.
- Premiums for employed persons covered by National Health Insurance depend on income, assets, and benefit payments from the previous year.