



How much should countries spend on health, and how can this expenditure be tracked? As health care systems around the world continuously develop in response to changing demographics, disease patterns rapid technological development and highly complicated funding mechanisms, this is the kind of information required by the experts and policy-makers who are responsible for determining national health accounts.

An effective health accounting system provides the information needed to develop policies that enhance equity and provide equitable health care financing by monitoring the progress of countries towards comprehensive health coverage. Since 2006, WHO and other organizations, through the contributions of health accountants around the world, have been reviewing and developing mechanisms for a new system of health accounting. In 2011, a new system – referred to as SHA2011 -- was developed.

The new guide for health accounting proposes a framework for the systematic description of financial flows within the health sector that is more suitable to inform national health policies, while also allowing for international comparisons. Conceptual and practical modifications to health accounting were introduced as part of the new system, and new and more detailed classifications were suggested.

To support countries in the Region apply this new system, build national capacity, and enhance knowledge of new developments in health care financing, the Regional Office recently organized a first-of-its-kind workshop in Doha, Qatar.

The workshop was attended by representatives from 12 countries in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, including prominent health accounting experts and practitioners of the Region. Participants reviewed the most up-to-date tools used to track health care expenditure and discussed some of the basic concepts and definitions of the new system, in addition to financing schemes, data sources, collection and analysis and health care financing policies.

Qatar is the first country of the Region to move towards adoption of the new system, signalling the country's commitment to providing world-class health care services to its citizens and residents. Most countries of the Region have published the first round of their national health accounts. Some countries, such as Egypt, Jordan and Yemen, have even published multiple rounds. Others, such as the Islamic Republic of Iran, have produced time series accounts expanding over several years.

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