

# The science and practice of people-centered health systems

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A unique collection of studies exploring the theme of the Third Global Symposium on Health Systems Research has been published today in a supplement to *Health Policy and Planning*.

This collection of studies on 'the science and practice of people-centred health systems' presents the latest in the field of [health policy](#) and systems research, bringing together research from Ethiopia, Uganda, Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa, India, Argentina and Brazil. The eleven studies comprising the supplement employ a range of methods to investigate different aspects of people-centred health systems, including the experiences of patients, [health workers](#) and the community, perceptions of policy-making and the [social determinants](#) of health. The following four themes defining people-centred health systems have emerged from this collection of studies:

1. Ensuring that people and communities have a role and voice in making decisions involving health systems.
2. Putting people first when designing and delivering health care services.
3. Recognising that health systems are social institutions, held together by chains of relationships between different individuals.
4. Recognising that human values drive decision-making within health systems, for example issues of justice, rights, respect and equality and the principles of [primary health care](#).

The supplement was edited by Kabir Sheikh (Public Health Foundation

of India), Michael Kent Ranson (World Bank) and Lucy Gilson (University of Cape Town and London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine), with funding from the Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research and the International Development Research Centre, Canada.

The editors, said:

"The papers highlight the political, social and ultimately human character of health systems. We need to create ways of managing and governing health systems so that ordinary people have a say."

Sharmila Mhatre, from the International Development Research Centre, said: "This supplement does justice to the heart and science of health systems research and is a foundational start to the term 'people-centred health systems'. The International Development Research Centre (IDRC) is honoured to support such research that delivers health for all."

Health systems are complex and face many challenges, wherever they are in the world. At their heart, health systems exist to serve people, whether they are patients, families, communities or health workers. The term 'people-centred' is relatively new to the health systems debate and focuses on all factors affecting health, not only biomedical solutions, including health service delivery, social justice and human rights. This supplement takes the health systems debate further by exploring different perspectives of the concept. It is released at the Third Global Symposium on Health Systems Research in the hope that it will inform debates in the Symposium and beyond the event. The topic is particularly relevant to people trying to bring about change in [health systems](#) in specific contexts.

**More information:** Sheikh, K., Ranson, M.K. & Gilson L (eds). (2014) Science and Practice of People-Centred Health Systems. Health

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