

Health System Expansion Without Proportional Health Gains? An Open-Data Policy Analysis of Healthcare Utilization and Overuse in Türkiye

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Abstract

Background: Health system reforms in Türkiye have substantially expanded healthcare access and utilization. However, whether increased service use has translated into proportional improvements in population health outcomes remains unclear.

Methods: This study employs a descriptive policy analysis combined with secondary analysis of open-access data from OECD, and national sources. Trends in healthcare utilization, selected population health outcomes, and system performance between 2003 and 2023 were examined descriptively using open-access OECD, World Bank, and national data, supplemented by comparative benchmarking and a narrative utilization–outcome gap framework.

Results: Healthcare utilization in Türkiye increased markedly, with physician visits per capita rising above OECD averages. Patient satisfaction followed a similar pattern, showing early gains followed by stabilization or decline. These findings indicate a growing divergence between service volume and health outcomes. Additional signals, including hospital-centered utilization patterns and evidence relevant to potentially avoidable hospitalizations, suggest emerging inefficiencies and potential overuse.

Conclusion: Türkiye appears to be transitioning from an access-expansion phase to a system maturity phase characterized by high utilization and a descriptive pattern compatible with diminishing marginal returns. Future improvements in population health will depend less on increasing service volume and more on enhancing care quality, coordination, and appropriateness. Policy priorities should include strengthening primary care gatekeeping, reducing low-value care, aligning incentives with outcomes, and improving data transparency. The Turkish case provides broader lessons for health systems globally, highlighting the need to shift from utilization-driven to value-based models of care.

Keywords: Health transformation, healthcare utilization, overuse, low-value care, Türkiye, health policy, OEC