

Abstract Title: Expanding Access, Improving Outcomes: Lessons from Bolivia's Universal Healthcare Coverage Implementation

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Abstract

Universal healthcare coverage (UHC) ensures everyone can access health services without financial barriers, but achieving it is challenging. In the United States, healthcare coverage is often tied to socioeconomic status, leading to disparities in access and outcomes. Programs like the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and Medicaid expansion have increased coverage for low-income populations. Still, gaps remain for those who don't qualify for Medicaid and can't get private insurance (Li et al., 2021).

To explore UHC's impact on healthcare disparities, we studied Bolivia's healthcare system, a third-world country that has successfully implemented UHC. Our three-week observational study in Tarija, Bolivia, involved rotations in Surgery, Primary Care, and Tropical Diseases units. Bolivia's UHC improved access to care, especially for marginalized populations, by removing patient fees and expanding primary care services in underserved areas. These findings suggest that expanding programs like Medicaid in the US could reduce healthcare disparities and improve outcomes. It also highlighted the importance of comprehensive health policies for equitable access. It gave valuable insights into how Bolivia's UHC model can foster global health efforts to enhance equity by providing a framework for other countries striving to implement similar systems.