

Health needs, demand for health services and expenditure among the poor

Objective: The Social Safety Net in the field of health launched by the Indonesian Government in August 1998, in anticipation of an economic crisis will finish by the end of October 2003. The objective of this study was to provide inputs to the Community Medical Services Insurance as an exit strategy to solve the problems especially those related to access to health care by the poor.

Design: Health interview survey

Setting: Purworejo District, Central Java, Indonesia

Participants: A total of 311 poor households were randomly chosen from a sample of 12,721 selected households using a two-stage cluster sampling method with probability proportional to estimated size from a total of 152,146 households within the district.

Interventions: None

Main Outcome Measures: Health status (self assessment, total number of illness episodes, restricted activity days, severity scale), use of health services (all types of uses) and reported health expenditure were used. Reference was made to the previous four weeks.

Results: The assessment of health status across social groups showed the weakest social groups as the most vulnerable. A bad health status was more frequent among people with lower education (no schooling 33.8%), under five (39.8%) and old age (34.5%). There was a strong concentration of needs, uses and expenditures. The last five percentile of the population accounted for 22.6% of total illness episodes and was responsible for 21.6% of the health services used and 77.2% of expenditure. Looking at the concentrations according to the severity index, the situation appeared even more striking: 0.4% of the total population, namely the hospitalized, accounted for 57.4% of total health expenditure with only 1.7% of total illness episodes.

Conclusions: This study showed that there was a high concentration of utilization of health services and health expenditure for severe illnesses, indicating the need for programs to promote the utilization of health services and health expenditure toward preventive health care.

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