

EDITORIAL

Most countries of united Europe are under constant pressure to review and rebuild their healthcare systems. While the set of reform patterns varies among countries, the interest in changes has spread to encompass nearly every dimension of present-day arrangements. A central problem of this expanding reform process has been the long learning circle. It typically requires several years from the implementation of a particular initiative before it is possible to assess its impact. The greatest pressure for change has been the increased role of the private sector in the provision and, in some countries, the founding of healthcare. A number of market-style mechanisms have been applied to different sub-sectors of the health system.

This volume presents a set of essays which review the available evidence about past or expected outcomes from a wide range of healthcare reform. It attempts to dispel some of the dilemmas about what works, what doesn't work, how and why in the field of healthcare reform. The essays cover a wide range of problems, dealing with a variety of conceptual and practical issues involved in health policy, healthcare units' management, and delivering services in contemporary European healthcare systems.

The cross-national evidence presented in this volume indicates that healthcare reforms emerge as an important dimension of the overall reform process in Europe. It will, however, be particular important to expand the evidentiary foundation upon which such policy making needs to be based. This volume should thus be perceived as a contribution to an analytic process that requires further cross-national studies.

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