



Healthcare reform in the Middle East and the USA

Journal of **Comparative Effectiveness Research**

Mustafa Z Younis speaks to Laura Dormer, Commissioning Editor: Dr Mustafa Z Younis is an internationally recognized scholar and was a member of the Executive Committee of the International Society for Research of Healthcare Financial Management. Dr Younis has authored and published over 200 articles, abstracts and presentations in refereed journals and meetings, and has presented at national and international conferences. Dr Younis has administrative experience as Senior Adviser for the President at Zirve University, Turkey and as Chair of the Department of Health Policy and Management at Florida International University (FL, USA) where he led the accreditation efforts for the Healthcare Management Program. Dr Younis has a history of playing visible roles on the editorial boards of journals as Chief Editor, Guest Editor and Editorial Board Member of leading journals such as *Journal of International Medical Research*, *Journal of Health Care Finance*, *Inquiry Journal of Health and Human Services Administration*, *Journal of Public Budgeting, Accounting and Financial Management*. Dr Younis is a frequent speaker for both academic and professional audiences. His talks often feature his latest research and work in progress as well as cross-industry trends and strategy implications. He has provided workshops and presentation for wide organizations. His research and findings applied to for-profit, non-profit settings, and government. Dr Younis has consulted with several organizations on healthcare finance, and economics. Dr Younis is often invited to speak about the challenges in the healthcare industry and other related topics to health economics, finance, and research. He has presented topics such as, healthcare reform, ownership structure, profitability, unit cost, payment system and efficiency in management, at a variety of forums and conferences in Europe, Asia and Middle East.



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Q During your last interview with the *Comparative Effectiveness Research* journal in 2013 [1], you discussed healthcare challenges facing the Middle East. How have things changed since then? What are the most pressing challenges currently?

Healthcare in the Middle East has faced more challenges since 2013. First, the decline in oil prices from over US\$100 per barrel in 2013

to around US\$45 in the second half of 2016 puts downward pressure on the fiscal budget of the oil-producing countries in the Middle East. Second, the continuation of the political instability and the exodus of millions of refugees to neighboring countries exhausted the financial resources of such poor countries. The Middle East has faced instability in Yemen, Syria, Iraq and Libya, has created challenges for institutions and service delivery.

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Q Where have you been working most recently & what have your research activities been?

I spent spring 2016 sabbatical in Turkey where I served as ‘Senior Advisor’ to the President of Zirve University. I took a few trips lecturing in China and other institutions in Turkey. Currently, I am the ‘Guest Editor’ and Editor in Chief for several academic journals. Additionally, I am affiliated with Harvard Medical School, as Partner and Collaborator of Aging of Economic and Finance, Harvard University Asia Center.

Q What areas is your current research focusing on?

I am continuing my collaborations with international scholars in the USA, Germany, Norway, Australia, China and the Middle East. We are exploring topics in diabetes, nursing homes, hospital financing and other issues related to the healthcare sector in these countries. I expect to continue presenting my future, current and past research internationally. I expect to lecture at Tsinghua University, one of the leading universities in China, University of Bergen – Norway, Jena University in Germany and other universities in Kuwait, United Arab Emirates and Qatar. Furthermore, I am working on a second edition on a book for Aging in the Arab world with Professor William Ward at University of South Florida (FL, USA).

Q How could preventive health services be improved in the Middle East?

The government and other healthcare organizations are increasing their focus on preventive healthcare as a means of cost containment and outcomes improvement. They have used the media and other educational outreach to promote immunizations and other forms of prevention. However, they continue to face the major obstacles of low literacy rates and political instability in the region, which can limit the success of these efforts.

Q In your 2013 interview, you mentioned the risk of comparative effectiveness research being misused “as a budgetary tool rather than providing the option with the best quality outcome.” What are your thoughts on this currently?

Public financing is continuing for comparative effectiveness research through the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute and Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. However, there is a need to increase the public–private partnership in this area. My current thought is that the outcome of comparative effectiveness research will be a good tool to contain healthcare costs or increase the profit margin. Policy-makers should be aware of the potential for transfer of these savings to the citizen or sharing the savings between institutions and patients.

Q Do you have any final comments for the readers of the *Journal of Comparative Effectiveness Research*?

I appreciate that the editorial team of the *Journal of Comparative Effectiveness Research* is keeping this important topic in the public arena. I appreciate the collaborations with my co-authors in USA, Europe, Asia and Middle East. Thank you to Provost Dr Evelyn Leggette, and Associate Provost Dr Thomas Calhoun and Ms Robin Pack for facilitating my sabbatical in spring 2016. Special Appreciations for Dr Adnan Kisa for his support and hosting me during my sabbatical in Turkey.

Disclaimer

The opinions expressed in this interview are those of the interviewee and do not necessarily reflect the views of Future Medicine Ltd.

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Reference

- 1 Younis MZ. Interview: comparative effectiveness research and challenges to healthcare reform in the Middle East and USA. *J. Comp. Eff. Res.* 2(3), 223–225 (2013).