

Factors Affecting the High Mortality Rate in Morocco

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The mortality rate of Morocco is arguably quite high when compared to that of its neighboring countries of Algeria and Tunisia. As of 2015, the mortality rate of Morocco stands out at 24 deaths per 1,000 live persons whereas for Algeria and Tunisia are at 22 and 12 deaths per 1,000 live persons respectively (Mortality rate, infant (per 1,000 live births), 2015). These three countries are in the same geographic region and, therefore, they face the same challenges health-wise such as similarities in the occurrences of diseases. As a result, it is possible to infer that the cause of the higher rate of mortality in Morocco is as a result of policies by the government, the ratio of health personnel to the population and the education system for health professionals in the country.

Public hospitals in Morocco are usually understaffed and ill-equipped. Regardless of this, they are relied upon by over 70% of the population since less than 30% of the population has some form of health insurance coverage that would enable them to seek health care services in better private medical facilities. In comparison to her neighbors, Morocco, spends a less percentage of its annual budget on health care. While Algeria and Tunisia spend 8.12 percent and 6.2 percent respectively, the Moroccan government spends approximately 6.5 percent on health care (Alami, 2013). This value is inclusive of funding from international agencies in addition to the capital and recurrent spending by the local and central government budgets. In the annual budget of 2013, the government \$5 billion to health care which amount to 3.2 percent of the total budget. This amount is clearly not sufficient for the medical needs of Morocco as it has been translating in the form of the countries' high mortality rate over time. A number of hospitals are reported as not having adequate laboratory facilities for testing a number of illnesses while others have had crucial components of the hospital shut down such as the operating theatre at Baouafi Hospital, which has been closed down since April 2011 (Alami, 2013). The poor conditions of

the hospitals can also be seen in how Moroccans generally try to avoid visiting them. Among the three countries, Moroccans spend approximately \$147 annually whereas Tunisians and Algerians spend \$246 and \$186 respectively.

Another significant challenge that Morocco faces is that of the ratio of the personnel to the general population. Morocco has approximately 5 doctors for every 10,000 inhabitants, and this is much less when compared to Tunisia and Algeria, which have 13 and 11 doctors respectively per every 10,000 inhabitants. The same trend can also be witnessed for the paramedics as there are 8 paramedics per 10,000 inhabitants whereas in Tunisia and Algeria there are 29 and 22 paramedics respectively per 10,000 inhabitants (Semlali, 2010). This deficiency in healthcare personnel is the result of a limited number of graduates in medical related fields. This is because there are few medical training schools in the country. However, the solution to this problem may have been reached at with the private education sector looking to start offering training in medical related fields. One institution that is looking forward to easing the pressure on the public institutions is l'Univesite des Sciences et de Sante de Casablanca (USSC) even though there are questions as to whether they will maintain integrity during selection due to the limited spaces available (Elotmani, 2014).

Morocco is also faced with a severe shortage of nurses than other countries which compare to it in regards to national income. By 2011, there were 29,025 nurses (registered and auxiliary) in the country. This number means there were 8 nurses per 10,000 inhabitants in the entire country. The Institut Europeen des Sciences de la Sante (European Institute of Health Sciences) in Casablanca predicted the situation would worsen in future based on studies they conducted unless the country produced 40,000 to 80,000 graduated by the year 2025 (Sante en Chifre, 2012)

Morocco is a country which is plagued by its high mortality rate when compared to other countries in the same geographical region as well as countries that have almost the same income as Morocco. There challenges are arising from a number of issues such as the severe shortage of medical personnel all over Morocco, the failure of the government to commit more resources towards improving the health sector in the country and the failure of the education system of the country to provide an adequate number of trainees to work in the health sector. Due to this issue, Morocco is on the verge of a crisis is about to explode on the citizens considering that the rate of uninsured persons in the country is extremely high. It is my recommendation for the government to seek policies that ensure a larger percentage of the population is insured. The government should also support the private institutions to provide more personnel to supplement those graduating from public institutions. Moreover, the government should review its entire focus on the health structure of the country and ensure they prioritize its rehabilitation.

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