Assessing domains and barriers of healthcare access: A narrative review

Umi Farhana Abdul Halim, Mohamed Fakhri Abu Baharin

Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, 71800 Bandar Baru Nilai, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Healthcare is essential in many facets of life. Consequently, access to healthcare is critical for preserving health quality and enhancing overall quality of life. This study sought to define healthcare access, identify its domains or dimensions, examine barriers to access, and propose solutions for improving healthcare access. **Materials and Methods:** The method was by searching articles from electronic databases: PubMed, Scopus, Science Direct, Springer and other reputable websites. All relevant articles were analyzed. **Results:** Healthcare access is defined as the timely use of health services to achieve optimal health outcomes, encompassing a complex interplay among patients, providers, finances, funders, and the social milieu in which patients live. Moreover, healthcare access encompasses five areas or dimensions, which include approachability, acceptability, availability, accommodation, cost, and appropriateness. The relevant dimensions are the capacity to perceive, the capacity to seek, the capacity to reach, the capacity to pay, and the capacity to participate. The geographical location, cultural and ethnic factors, financial constraints, facilities, and inadequate care are the barriers encompassed under the dimensions. **Conclusion:** The enhancements from the government, medical professionals, and the community are crucial to ensure the continuity of healthcare access for future generations.

Keywords: Healthcare access, domains healthcare accessibility, barrier healthcare access