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A comparative analysis of oral health care systems in the United States, United Kingdom, France, Canada, and Brazil

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Abstract

Brazil has developed a dynamic and complex health care system and in terms of oral health care, the Brazilian Constitution ensures for universal coverage. The 2004 Brazilian oral health policy "Smiling Brazil" also increased federal funds to provide comprehensive and universal access to oral health care. However, the magnitude of inequality in Brazil remains large compared to developed countries. In this context, a macro analysis of health care systems can help us understand how different countries organize and deliver health care and provides an opportunity to observe what can be done well, and what can cause challenges to achieving positive health and system outcomes. The purpose of this study was thus to conduct a comparative analysis of the oral health care system in Brazil with four countries, the United States, United Kingdom, France and Canada. A collection of published information sources was located to identify key indicators for a comparative framework to analyse the oral health care systems. Quantitative data were gathered from different databases and national statistics offices. Diverse patterns to organize, finance and deliver oral health care were found among the countries analyzed, but a common point was that oral health care is an exception in terms of general organization, financing and delivery, even in countries with universal coverage for general health care. Our findings suggest that Brazil should concentrate efforts to increase coverage by public sources for oral health care, and to allocate more public resources to finance oral health care. Finally, in order to maximize the reduction of social inequalities in oral health and oral health care, Brazil needs to keep building a system committed to providing oral health care free at the point of service.

MeSH Keywords: Health care systems, Health expenditures; Delivery of health care, Oral health; Inequalities; Brazil.

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