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Operations Research and Health Care

A Handbook of Methods and Applications

In both rich and poor nations, public resources for health care are inadequate to meet demand. Policy makers and health care providers must determine how to provide the most effective health care to citizens using the limited resources that are available. This chapter describes current and future challenges in the delivery of health care, and outlines the role that operations research (OR) models can play in helping to solve those problems. The chapter concludes with an overview of this book – its intended audience, the areas covered, and a description of the subsequent chapters. **KEY WORDS** Health care delivery, Health care planning **HEALTH CARE DELIVERY: PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES** 3 **1.1 WORLDWIDE HEALTH: THE PAST 50 YEARS** Human health has improved significantly in the last 50 years. In 1950, global life expectancy was 46 years [1]. That figure rose to 61 years by 1980 and to 67 years by 1998 [2]. Much of these gains occurred in low- and middle-income countries, and were due in large part to improved nutrition and sanitation, medical innovations, and improvements in public health infrastructure.

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