



Roads to Health - Multi-State Modeling of Population Health and Resource Use

Louis Niessen

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Many populations in the world have entered the health transition, leading to population increases and aging. The rising awareness of the health benefits of prevention and treatment causes an enormous competition for scarce resources among rich and poor.

The book quantifies the effects of health determinants on lifetime health for priority setting. It accounts for uncertainties, using demographic techniques. It distinguishes macro-determinants, income, literacy, food and water, and micro-determinants, like smoking and specific interventions. It examines how some “roads to health” may lead to more lifetime health and at the expense of fewer resources than others.

Populations follow their own path towards health defined by its pattern of determinants, as shown for India, Mexico, and The Netherlands. Analyses show 1) competing health risks causing inertia in disease elimination, and 2) huge potentials for both prevention and treatment. High income may lead to better health; literacy and health services make their own contribution. The stroke example shows that costly care for acute patients yields higher population benefit and is more cost-efficient than prevention of more strokes. A diabetes example shows that, given low budgets, cost-effective care of complications is more useful than expensive diabetes control.

Information on health gains, costs and for whom, enables policy makers to choose those interventions that, given available resources, maximise health and promote equity

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