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State and improvement measures of Primary care in Korea

Symposium Report - Korean Medical Association



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State of primary care in Korea

State of Primary care in Korea

- **Korea introduced the national healthcare insurance system in 1977 and expanded it nationwide in 1989. Since then, the country has boasted a globally recognized healthcare system and advanced medical care. The level of satisfaction with health and medical services has consistently remained the highest in the world.**

State of Primary care in Korea

- **According to health data published annually by the OECD, most health-related indicators for Koreans, such as life expectancy, infant mortality rate, age-standardized mortality rates for various diseases, and avoidable mortality rates, have topped among the OECD member states. The healthcare standards have significantly improved, making Korea a country that offers universally advanced healthcare services among OECD members.**

State of Primary care in Korea

- **With remarkable advancements in medical technology, Korea has been attracting foreign patients and witnessing a thriving medical tourism industry.**



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Primary care in crisis

Primary care in crisis

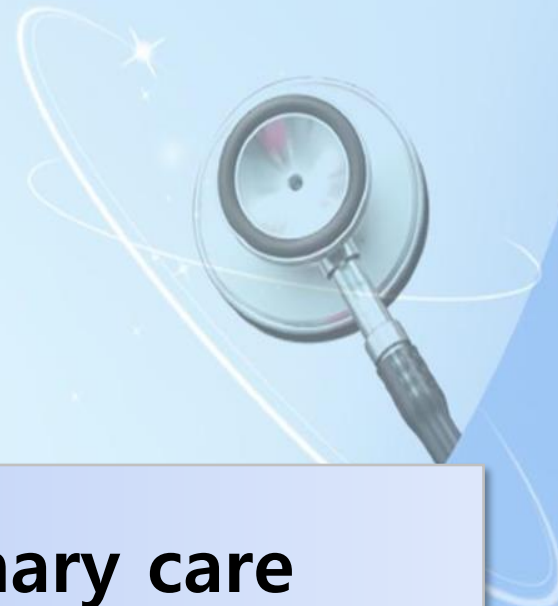
- **As the nation's economy and transportation infrastructure developed and income level rose, there's a growing trend among citizens to become more health-conscious and seek advanced medical services. In this context, the increasing establishment of branch hospitals by university hospitals in the greater Seoul metropolitan area could potentially accelerate the concentration of patients in general hospitals.**

Primary care in crisis

- **The competition among university hospitals to establish more branch hospitals not only indiscriminately absorbs patients but also medical personnel from the local primary healthcare institutions as well as smaller-sized hospitals in the vicinity. This negatively impacts the management of these local primary care institutions and smaller-sized hospitals. The worsening operational environment and higher closure rates of local healthcare institutions resulted in the destruction of the medical ecosystem and the local healthcare system, leading to the collapse of the healthcare delivery system and higher medical costs.**

Primary care in crisis

- **The unclear differentiation of functions and roles among different types of medical institutions and the inadequate observance of the healthcare system use framework is leading to an increasing concentration of patients in large hospitals, exacerbating the phenomenon. This ultimately contributes to the deterioration of primary healthcare.**



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**Improvement plans for Primary care
(10 suggestions)**

Improvement plans for primary care(10 suggestions)

- 1. Establish legal and institutional measures to prevent indiscriminate branch hospitals by university hospitals in the greater Seoul metropolitan area**
- 2. Address the imbalanced distribution of beds among regions and enhance bed management (Necessity of limiting new bed additions in the metropolitan area)**

***Under the current Medical Act, city and provincial governors cannot grant a license to open a hospital-level medical institution if it does not meet the basic measures of the bed supply plan and the supply and management plan.**

Improvement plans for primary care(10 suggestions)

- 3. Provide various support measures for primary medical institutions and small and medium-sized hospitals that are suffering from the flow of patients to general hospitals due to the construction of new beds in the metropolitan area**

- 4. Improve physician staffing standards for dedicated specialists per bed and secure national funding with fee linkage**
 - Improved fee structure**
 - Strengthened standards applied to general hospitals**
 - Surcharged regional fees**

Improvement plans for primary care(10 suggestions)

- 5. Establish a healthcare delivery system and develop collaborative framework**
- 6. Ensure referral and patient transfer system**
- 7. Develop incentives for regional medical care**
- 8. Encourage proper use of medical services by patients**

Improvement plans for primary care(10 suggestions)

9. Improve awareness on reasonable medical services use

10. Allow medical institutions and health centers to observe their primary role



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Necessity to establish a new system

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- **Korea is experiencing a rapidly aging population, and chronic diseases are diversifying and expanding.**
- **An efficient healthcare and general care system for healthy aging should be established in an ultra-aged society. If not, the increased medical expenses could become a significant national burden.**
- **Korea is also seeking a new approach that combines medical care and general care, aiming to revitalize primary healthcare institutions. Introducing a unique, tailored community care system seeks to address the public's health and cost efficiency.**



Thank you