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"NO ONE LEFT ABANDONED": CUBA'S NATIONAL HEALTH SYSTEM SINCE THE 1959 REVOLUTION

Pol De Vos

Abstract:

In spite of the economic hardships during the 1990s, Cuba has achieved health indicators that are among the best in the world. This article describes the development of the Cuban health system over more than four decades and analyzes its dynamics. Four stages can be identified. The system's foundations were laid during the first post-revolutionary decade (1959-1970) and consolidated during the succeeding decade (1970-1979). In the third stage, from 1980 onward, the system reached its full expansion with the development of family medicine. Following the crisis of the 1990s, a fourth stage began with reforms and adjustments to the new situation after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Today, health care continues to be of high quality and free for all Cubans. It remains exclusively in the hands of the public sector, and privatization is not an option. This is exactly the opposite of what is happening in other parts of the world where public services are underfunded and people are made to believe that privatization is the only way to ensure high-quality care.

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