

Appendix 1. The Primary Care System in Israel

Israel has a universal healthcare system comprising four nonprofit health maintenance organizations (HMOs). Citizens must enroll in one of the HMOs and pay monthly premiums based on income. The HMOs are responsible for providing a comprehensive package of medical services to their members.

Primary care is the main point of entry into the healthcare system. Each HMO operates primary care clinics where patients choose or are assigned a primary care physician (PCP), usually an internist. PCPs serve as the first contact and ongoing source of care for managing health issues and coordinating referrals to specialists if needed.

Primary care clinics offer a range of services including preventive screenings, chronic disease management, Acute care for minor illnesses and injuries. Geriatric patients in particular rely heavily on primary care to address their complex medical and social needs. With the aging of Israel's population, the role of primary care in caring for seniors is expanding.

Specialist care, hospital services, and diagnostic tests require referrals from PCPs. This fosters a coordinated system with primary care serving as the central hub of patient care. However, it also means the quality of primary care directly impacts access to higher levels of treatment and management of chronic conditions.