

Chapter 56 – The National Health Service

Milestones:

1948: creation of the NHS by Labour party

1948-1974: Tripartite System

1951: NHS introduce taxes

1974: creation of the Area Health Authorities

1990: NHS and Community Care Act

1991: NHS Trusts which provided all health care by 1995

1997: a new organisation closer to patients : Primary Care Trusts

2011: GP took the control of this system

In 1948, when Labour party was leading UK, they created the National Health Service (NHS) in order to give equitable access to health care, free of charge and to everybody in the country. Before that, patient used to pay for their own health care, so the poorest were unable to afford the medical treatment they required.

At this time, NHS was structured in three parts, the *Tripartite System*:

- *Primary Care* : involve family practitioner services;
- *Community Services* : involve community nursing and health visiting;
- *Hospital Services* : 14 Regional Hospitals Boards were created in

England and Wales to administer the great majority of hospital services.

However, it was clear that this system would be almost impossible to maintain and to control due to financial costs. Thus, by 1951, the NHS was forced to introduce some fees, hence it had acquired characteristics that it would never manage to lose.

Throughout the 60s and early 70s, lots of difficulties of the Tripartite System have appeared, which separated hospital, community and primary care services. Thus in 1974, this flawed system was abandoned, and replaced by the Area Health Authorities (AHAs) which bring all health services together under one.

Financial pressures continued to plague the NHS in the 1980s. By 1988, Conservative Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher reshaped the structure and organisation of Health Service introducing more forceful business and internal market principles via the NHS and Community care Act of 1990. By 1991, health organisations were transformed into NHS trusts which provide hospital, community and mental/learning disability services. Nevertheless, with this independent organisation, concurrence started between other organisations, thus the richest doctors obtained better treatment for their patient than the poorest. Therefore, NHS was no longer providing fair and equal access for all to health care.

In 1997, the Labour government renewed the medical system by implementing *Primary Care Trusts* to reduce financial costs. Furthermore after 2011, this system has been put in the hands of general practitioners to avoid criticism levelled at GPs fund-holding system of the 90s. Hence, the National

Health Service has reduced inequalities, so it can still claim to be largely successful despite its many flaws.

