

Sussex China Seminar Series

Perspectives on Social, Technological and Environmental Dynamics in a Changing China

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China's management of health system change: reform, mutual learning and global health

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Abstract

This seminar will explore the Chinese Government's approach to the management of health system reform. It will introduce the context of rapid and interconnected changes within which the Chinese health system has had to adapt over the past three decades and discuss the government's strategy for preventing system collapse and meeting rapidly changing needs. This has combined the establishment of core system objectives, identification of major problems to be addressed, encouragement of local governments to experiment with strategies for addressing these problems and evolution of national sector strategies. New problems have emerged at each stage. Over time, the government has established complex institutional arrangements and it has been increasingly willing to allocate substantial amounts of public funds. It has also created mechanisms for learning from these experiences and encouraging learning between localities in China and from abroad. This approach has enabled the government to provide widespread access to health services although these services are highly flawed. The government has applied a similar approach to its engagement with global health institutions. It actively sought collaboration with the World Bank and bilateral agencies in its internal development programmes and encouraged senior government officials to take on management roles in international agencies. The Government is now pursuing a more active role in global health. The seminar will conclude with a discussion of the possible impact of China's approach to experimentation and mutual learning on global health.

Biography

Gerald Bloom is a health system analyst based at the IDS, who has been involved in a number of studies of China's management of health system change. He convenes work on health for the STEPS Centre and for the newly established Centre for the Rising Powers in Global Development. Over the years he has convened a series of workshops with Chinese researchers to explore China's approach to institution-building in the health sector. More recently he has become interested in China's engagement in global health. He has organised a number of activities for health policy analysts from the BRICS to explore similarities and differences in their management of rapid health system change. One aim is to provide opportunities for mutual learning as a means of building shared understanding of global health challenges and approaches for addressing them.