David Blumenthal, “Quality of Health Care, Part 1: Quality of Care: What Is It?”

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- quality of care is hard define:

- Donabedian (1980): “care which is expected to maximize an inclusive measure of patient welfare, after one has taken account of the balance of expected gains and losses that attend the process of care in all its parts”

- American Medical Association (1984): “care which consistently contributes to the improvement or maintenance of quality and/or duration of life”

- Institute of Medicine: “the degree to which health services for individuals and populations increase the likelihood of desired health outcomes and are consistent with current professional knowledge”

- different formulations and perspectives possible based on one’s location in the healthcare system

- perspective of healthcare professionals: define quality in terms of the attributes and results of care provided by practitioners and received by the patient

- two dimensions:
  - appropriateness of services provided
  - skill with which appropriate care is performed

- healthcare must also be responsive to the preferences and values of consumers

- there is some debate on the extent to which patient preferences can be measured or should be taken into account

- patient-centered care: consumers should have the necessary information and resources to make judgements about healthcare
• perspective of healthcare plans and organizations: they tend to focus on the health of their enrollees and the functioning of their organizational system; importance of meeting enrollees' needs and accessibility

• perspective of organized purchasers of healthcare (employers, unions, consumer cooperatives): concerned about population-based measures of quality and organizational performance