

## Editor-in-Chief Notes

## Challenges of Rehabilitation Services in Iran: Editor-in-Chief Notes

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Similar to many other nations, Iran is committed to achieving universal health coverage, which includes the provision of accessible and high-quality rehabilitation services. Consequently, several legislative measures have been enacted to regulate the sector. However, a closer examination of these laws reveals numerous systemic challenges that impact critical health system functions, such as procurement, financing, resource allocation, service delivery, accountability, and overall quality.

Beyond legal and systemic hurdles, governance inefficiencies further complicate Iran's rehabilitation landscape. Key governance challenges include disproportionate policy frameworks, uncoordinated interventions, inadequate regulatory oversight, and inconsistencies among various governmental departments. Additionally, rehabilitation financing in Iran remains imbalanced, as reflected in the third chapter of the Sixth Development Plan, which highlights the shortcomings of supportive institutions, particularly insufficient funding and coverage gaps. Importantly, the plan underscores that direct financial aid alone is insufficient to address rehabilitation needs effectively.

Unlike many nations with comprehensive legal frameworks for disability data collection, Iran remains in the nascent phase of establishing a centralized database

for individuals with disabilities. Furthermore, the Comprehensive Law on the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2013) does not embody a rights-based framework centered on equal recognition. Instead, it reflects a welfare-oriented approach, prioritizing economic support over the guarantee of equal protections and opportunities. This orientation is largely influenced by the participation of governmental bodies, including the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor, and Social Welfare, and the National Welfare Organization. The prevailing policy discourse tends toward rehabilitation rather than empowerment, resulting in a budget-driven framework rather than a holistic, rights-based approach.

Iran's rehabilitation sector faces numerous difficulties that hinder its efficiency and accessibility. Among these, financial limitations remain a primary concern, with inadequate funding and significant gaps in coverage affecting service delivery.

Additionally, the absence of a thorough evaluation framework weakens the ability to monitor program success and assess individual rehabilitation progress. This issue was further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted healthcare services, strained resources, and hindered rehabilitation efforts.

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Efforts to implement Community-Based Rehabilitation also face setbacks due to poor policy formulation, insufficient consideration of local needs, and lack of structured evaluation mechanisms. Furthermore, international sanctions have negatively impacted the availability of essential medical equipment and supplies, particularly for physical rehabilitation.

Access to rehabilitation remains uneven, with infrastructure challenges and resource shortages disproportionately affecting rural areas and specialized care services. Additionally, inconsistencies in policy enforcement, weak oversight, and fragmented governance impede the effective administration of rehabilitation programs.

Another pressing issue is the lack of a centralized and comprehensive disability database, which hinders informed decision-making and the development of evidence-based policies.

In conclusion, addressing the multifaceted challenges facing rehabilitation services in Iran requires a holistic reform. This includes restructuring legal frameworks towards rights-based approaches, enhancing governance coordination, increasing sustainable financing, strengthening data systems, and ensuring localized, culturally sensitive program implementation. Only through such comprehensive measures can Iran advance equitable, efficient, and high-quality rehabilitation services for all citizens.