Academics Pick Up the Challenges of Franchising in Healthcare:
A Systematic Review

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Abstract

The organizational form of franchising is increasingly used in the healthcare sector with the aim of enhancing quality and accessibility of care for patients, improving the efficiency and competitiveness of healthcare organizations and/or providing healthcare professionals with a supportive working environment. However, an overview of the scientific evidence for these claims is absent. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to provide a systematic review of literature on outcomes of franchising in healthcare. Eight major databases were systematically searched and evaluated. Peer-reviewed empirical journal articles focusing on the relationship between franchising and outcomes were included, without placing limitations on dates of publication. This resulted in the inclusion of 15 articles. The majority of these articles present low levels of evidence. The review shows that outcomes of franchising in healthcare have primarily been evaluated in developing countries in the reproductive health/family planning sector. Articles from developed countries are largely absent, apart from three articles evaluating pharmacy franchises. Most studies focus on outcomes for customers. There has been less focus on organizations and professionals. Franchising is predominantly positively associated with customer volumes, physical accessibility, and some types of quality. The findings regarding utilization, customer loyalty, efficiency, and results for providers are mixed. We conclude that franchising has potential to improve outcomes in healthcare practices for patients, professionals and organizations, but that extensive further research is needed to determine the value of healthcare franchising. We advocate more research in developed countries, in other healthcare
sectors, on more types of outcomes with attention to trade-offs, and on what factors produce those outcomes.

**Key words:** health care, outcomes, quality, literature review, customers