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Exploration on Responsibilities of Township Government in the New Rural Cooperative Medical System: Against the Background of Building Social Security System in Urban and Rural Areas

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Abstract

At present, a new rural cooperative medical system (NRCMS) is a basic system in China to guarantee medical and health conditions in rural areas, which is the achievement of continuous attempts made by government at all levels to improve medical and health services in rural areas. Against the background of constructing social security system in urban and rural areas, township governments as performers of the system should shoulder important responsibilities of guaranteeing sustainable development of NRCMS.

Against background of building social security in urban and rural areas, through introduction of NRCMS, this paper fixed the role of township governments as interpersonal communicators, information senders and decision makers in implementing NRCMS, further analyzed responsibilities should be taken by township governments from four aspects, explored unperformed responsibilities by township governments in implementing NRCMS, revealed reasons for unperformed responsibilities by township governments, and strengthened responsibilities should be taken by township governments before, during and after implementing NRCMS.

Key words: Plans for development in urban and rural areas; NRCMS; Government responsibilities

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INTRODUCTION

On the third plenary session of the Eighteenth CPC Central Committee, Decision by CPC Central Committee on Comprehensively Deepening Reforms on Major Issues, in which made overall plans on deepening reforms in rural areas, empowered rural residents more rights and interests, take promoting integrated development in urban and rural areas as the mainline, clearly stated "five plans for urban and rural areas": Balance infrastructure building in urban and rural areas and community construction, balance coordinated distribution of compulsory educational resources in urban and rural areas, provide balanced public employment and job creation service system for urban and rural areas, integrate basic pension insurance system for urban and rural residents, basic medical insurance system and promote balanced development of urban and rural minimum living system". Only balanced development in urban and rural areas can achieve coordinated development realizes the gradual improvement and coordinated development in rural medical security system.

1. ADVANCEMENT OF QUESTIONS

Viewed from historical development, rural medical security has been a worldwide problem plagued many countries. In the past, China has established medical and health institutions to provide cooperative medical service and improve rural medical and health conditions which got remarkable achievements. However, as economic globalization and increasingly developed society, rural medical security system can not satisfy present economic and social development. In 2003, China has carried out pilots on the NRCMS in municipalities and counties and covered all citizens with the NRCMS in 2010, but problems including improper design, unperformed responsibilities by governments in implementing the NRCMS and no transparency in government functioning which inevitably impacted development of the NRCMS.

As performers of the system, township governments are the bridges for communication between the higher level government and rural residents, shouldering a series of responsibilities in implementing the NRCMS, such as popularize policies, rise funds and implement system. We can see that important responsibilities of township governments not only relate to efficiency of implementing the NRCMS but also relate to implementation and development of policies.

To adapt to the current economic and social development, based on the third plenary session of the Eighteenth CPC Central Committee and against backdrop of building social security system in urban and rural areas, this paper takes the NRCMS as research object and put forward measures to strengthen responsibilities by township governments through exploring and analyzing responsibilities by township governments.

2. ROLE ANALYSIS: REASONABLE POSITION OF TOWNSHIP GOVERNMENTS IN IMPLEMENTING THE NRCMS

Against the backdrop of social and economic transformation in China, reforms on plans for urban and rural development and integration of urban and rural development had been put on agenda. In implementing the NRCMS, reasonable role position to township governments is helpful to rapidly realize balanced development between urban and rural areas. In implementing the NRCMS, township governments are main responsibility takers, but not the only main responsibility takers, township governments, society and market should form the trinity mode, a good performing mechanism so as to fulfill their duties.

2.1 Role Position of Township Government in Implementing the NRCMS

According to the Chinese Constitution, continuous operation and implementation of the NRCMS are incumbent responsibilities of governments at all levels. According to Constitution of the People's Republic of China: Chinese people have rights to get help from the state and society when they are old, sick or lost working capacities, which shows that citizen in China has the rights get social security from governments.

Township governments are governments at the basic level and have incumbent duties to implement the NRCMS, which mainly manifest in the following aspects: firstly, as governments at the basic level, they should effectively implement orders from the higher level governments; secondly, they should promote development of science, education, culture, health and sports in an all around way; lastly, protect legitimate rights and interests and legal properties of the local people, so that township governments play an important role in comprehensively implementing the NRCMS. In 1973, Mintzberg pointed

out that managers were playing three roles: carrying out interpersonal communication, passing information and making decisions in his book *Essence of Management*. In implementing the NRCMS, township governments are playing the same roles as managers.

2.1.1 Roles as Interpersonal Communicators Played by Township Governments

The so called role as interpersonal communicators refers to work as leaders, communicators and coordinators. Township governments as governments at the basic level are standing point for implementing systems. In implementing the NRCMS, they know more about living situation and demands of rural residents than governments at higher levels, who are organizers, implementers and good communicators. Main responsibilities should be shouldered by them are including: (a) implement policies and orders from higher level governments; (b) actively make feedback from people's needs; (c) work as a bond between higher governments and the masses in communication and coordinate relationship between them.

2.1.2 The Roles as Information Senders Played by Township Governments

The so called roles as information senders played by township governments refer to work as monitors, communicators and spokesmen. In implementing the NRCMS, township governments are responsible for effectively popularizing the NRCMS so that rural residents can know more about it; monitoring the whole implementing process of the NRCMS and making it develop effectively and sustainably; and promulgating achievements and difficulties in implementing the NRCMS.

2.1.3 Roles as Decision Makers Played by Township Governments

The so called roles as decision makers played by township governments refer to work as entrepreneurs, resources distributors and confusion controllers. In implementing the NRCMS, problems of improper communication and coordination, irregular organization and implementation inevitably emerged which caused emergencies so that township governments should have capabilities to deal with these exceptions and resolve problems before they caused serious outcomes to avoid major conflicts between governments and the masses.

Through analyzing role position of township governments played as interpersonal communicators, information senders and decision makers, author of this paper revealed responsibilities should be shouldered by township governments in implementing the NRCMS according to role position.

2.2 Responsible Analysis of Township Governments in Implementing the NRCMS

Township governments as implementers of the NRCMS have important responsibilities in implementing the

NRCMS. Based on role position in three aspects, author of this paper analyzed responsibilities by township governments from three dimensions.

2.2.1 Policy Populization

The most important role played by township governments in implementing the NRCMS must be popularized policies, to implement policies made by governments at higher levels, popularization by township governments can not be separated. Nowadays is an era of “fragrant wine can not win popularity among people”, so that we must realize the importance of popularization. How to effectively popularize the NRCMS is a question should be considered thoughtfully by township governments. As interpretations of national policies by rural residents are limited, township governments should explain them with words easy to understand increasing awareness of the NRCMS by them and future promotes effective implementation of the NRCMS.

2.2.2 Fund Raising

As the 2012 National Health Conference noted that coverage of the NRCMS reached over 95%, Per capita payment was 60 yuan/year. On 25th August 2014, the Finance Ministry issued Notice on Increasing 2014 Funding Criteria for New Rural Cooperative Medical Care and Basic Medical Insurance of Urban Residents, in which pointed that per capita subsidies of new rural cooperative medical care rose by 40 yuan to 320 yuan on basis of that in 2013 so that national per capita payment was about 90 yuan/year. We can see that the central government has increased support to the NRCMS. As for funds paid by rural residents for the NRCMS, township governments have extremely important responsibilities to ensure voluntary insurance by rural residents and strictly manage funds raised so as to guarantee transparent functioning of the funds.

2.2.3 Coordination and Supervision

Township governments as coordinators between higher level governments and the public not only represent rights and interests of the public but also should collect suggestion on implementing the NRCMS, so as to coordinate relationship between higher level governments and the public. To ensure effective implementation of the NRCMS, township governments should set up offices for the NRCMS to report specific implementation to upper department, transparently collect funds and receive supervision from the masses.

3. REASON EXPLORATION: UNPERFORMED RESPONSIBILITIES BY TOWNSHIP GOVERNMENTS IN IMPLEMENTING THE NRCMS

According to definition of roles and responsibilities by township governments, we can see that township

governments play important roles in implementing the NRCMS which is a key guarantee for healthily and orderly implementing the NRCMS. However, in implementing the NRCMS, there are unperformed responsibilities by township governments, so that author of this paper analyzed and explored reasons for unperformed responsibilities by township governments.

3.1 Manifestation of Unperformed Responsibilities by Township Governments in Implementing the NRCMS

Against backdrop of planning social security in urban and rural areas, unperformed responsibilities by township governments in implementing the NRCMS mainly lies in four aspects:

3.1.1 Weak Legal Consciousness

The third plenary session of the Eighteenth CPC Central Committee pointed out building a service-based government with the rule of law. Governing the state according to law is objective needs of social development and important guarantee for social stability and long-term peace in the country. In the society with the rule of law, policies and systems without guarantee by laws can not be implemented well. One function of government is legislating. But in implementing the NRCMS, governments at all levels only issued documents and reports about the NRCMS, which have no authority of laws and regulations so that they led to problems in implementing the NRCMS.

Township governments as implementers of policies should not force the masses to participate in the new rural cooperative medical care, as the NRCMS has not been included in enforcement by the law which caused mistrust by rural residents to the NRCMS and impeded further development.

3.1.2 Improper Organization and Popularization

Starting point of implementing the NRCMS by the state is to benefit rural residents and it should be popularized that rural residents can voluntarily participate in insurance so as to increase the participation of citizens. However, in popularizing the process, there is improper popularization by some township governments. If township governments as implementers of policies do not properly popularize superiority and importance of the NRCMS will affect recognition and participation initiatives by rural residents to the NRCMS. Improper popularization by township governments mainly displayed as follows: (a) unitary popularization, which conveyed only through meetings; (b) personnel engaged in popularization did not have thorough understanding about the NRCMS. As improper popularization affected initiatives in participating insurance of rural residents. People participated insurance are unfamiliar with policies, such as process and percentage of medical expenses reimbursement will lead to conflicts between insurance participators and personnel of relevant institutions, which will further mistrust to

policies and grouse to governments from rural residents and seriously impact initiatives of rural residents.

3.1.3 Inadequate Supervision on Policies

Implementation of any policy can not be separated from sound supervising mechanism. Implementing the NRCMS, specifically require the participation of representatives of rural residents, but such policy did not be implemented. Most supervising institutions did not require participation of representatives of rural residents so that rural residents have no supervision right, right to know and right to participate which caused illegal use of funds, payments imbalance and adverse operating.

3.1.4 Responsibilities Unperformed in Funds Raising

The basis for implementing the NRCMS is funds rising. Only funds guaranteed can the system develops sustainable. In China, the NRCMS is implemented in a mode of combination individual payment, collective support and government funding. The defect of the model is that the parties involved did not shoulder their responsibilities. Rural residents are mainly funded providers of the NRCMS, but their economic capacity is limited which caused a dilemma in fund raising for the new rural cooperative medical care. On the other hand, township governments should not only shoulder responsibilities of raising funds but also responsible for the good operation of funds. Over past years, irregular operation of funds caused the following problems: (a) medical funds did not hand out timely; (b) accounts were not transparent; (c) time for raising funds was too long.

3.2 Reason Exploration of Unperformed Responsibilities by Township Governments in Implementing the NRCMS

3.2.1 Unperformed Legal Responsibilities

In implementing policies, laws are guarantees. In building social security in urban and rural areas of the state, to narrow the gap between urban and rural areas, the gap between new rural cooperative medical care and urban medical care is increasingly narrowed down. As having no authorized guarantee of law in implementing the NRCMS, the principle of voluntariness was followed which led to rural residents did not recognize the NRCMS and largely hindered sustainable development of the NRCMS.

3.2.2 Unbalanced Development in Urban and Rural Areas

Balanced development was implemented in urban and rural areas all over the country, but imbalanced development still existing not only in economy but also in public service and social security. Urban medical insurance system is compulsory, but new rural medical care was implemented following the principle of voluntariness. Individual payment is only a small part of urban medical insurance system, but which is contrary to the NRCMS, so we can see that the central government attached different importance to them. To narrow the gap

between urban and rural areas, township governments must improve its responsibilities and play its three roles well.

3.2.3 Imperfect Supervision Mechanism

Imperfect supervision mechanism is mainly displayed in internal and external supervision. Internal supervision mainly lies in weak self-regulation sense. In implementing the NRCMS, township governments did not set up a specialized regulatory agency, only temporarily assigned a worker to supervise the implementation, while other workers took no time to supervise implementation of the NRCMS, maybe because of pressure from their work. External supervision was lack of participation of rural residents who were the main part of the NRCMS. Rural residents as the objects of implementing the NRCMS did not supervise the process, so that they grasped little information about it, were excluded from supervisory mechanism and had no discourse power.

3.2.4 Low Quality of Cadres at Basic Level

Cadres at basic level are implementers of policies and should take extremely important responsibilities. Comprehension to the NRCMS and implementing altitude of cadres at basic level directly impact implementation of the NRCMS, which mainly displayed in the following aspects:

(a) worker in township governments did not have thorough understanding about the NRCMS and their operational capacity was low which caused information rural residents received after participated in the NRCMS disaccording with information they received before they participated in it, further caused discontent among rural residents. Without normative training to workers in charge of implementing the NRCMS directly affected their working capabilities, so that policies of the NRCMS can not be implemented which will damage interests of the rural residents and impede implementation of the NRCMS.

(b) There are defects in administration opinions of workers in township governments. The opinion of official standards is deeply rooted in government workers, township governments are communicators between higher governments and the masses. Nowadays, township governments are responsible for implementing polices from higher governments, so they pursued coverage of the NRCMS, instead of effectively solve people's problems.

4. MEASURES PROPOSED: STRENGTHEN RESPONSIBILITIES BY TOWNSHIP GOVERNMENTS IN IMPLEMENTING THE NRCMS

According to role position, responsibility analysis and reasons for unperformed responsibility of township governments in implementing the NRCMS,

responsibilities by township governments should be strengthened to further increase efficiency and strength in implementing the NRCMS.

4.1 Strengthening Responsibilities by Township Governments Before Implementing the NRCMS

Strengthening responsibilities by township governments before implementing the NRCMS mainly refers to popularise ways of the NRCMS and training on related workers. Improvement to popularizing ways are including: (a) diversify popularizing ways, such as issue promotional material, hold mobilization meetings, make use of billboards and visit citizens to find out their needs; (b) make promotional content objectively and accurately, and objectively explain the NRCMS and carry out counseling courses. Training on related workers should be carried out as follows: (a) Enhance thought quality of workers, establish a sense of service, enhance the sense of responsibility and form awareness of self supervision; (b) improve working capacity of workers, including capabilities in understanding, popularization, organization and coordination.

4.2 Strengthening Responsibilities by Township Governments When Implementing the NRCMS

Strengthening responsibilities by township governments when implementing the NRCMS mainly refers to improve performance examination and supervision mechanism of township governments. Performance examination carried out by township governments has been attached great importance to the economy but attached little importance to the service. To improve the situation township governments must take public service as its main function, when examine their performance, satisfaction on implementing the NRCMS and their opinions must be taken full consideration. Supervision mechanism of township governments consists of internal and external supervision. Internal supervision in implementing the NRCMS means that internal mechanism for rewards and punishments should be established in the NRCMS; as for external supervision indicates that the public should participate in implementing the NRCMS so that they are informed of the financial affairs and governments carry out transparent administration affairs.

4.3 Strengthening Responsibilities by Township Governments After Implementing the NRCMS

Strengthening responsibilities by township governments after implementing the NRCMS mainly refers to fully collect and grasp the suggestion from the masses to the

NRCMS, so as to form a long-term system. The masses as the main object of implementing the NRCMS directly experienced the system. They have most rights to remark advantages and disadvantages of the NRCMS, township governments should set up a feedback group for the NRCMS to comprehensively collect opinions from the masses through dialogue and communication with the masses on the equality and patient listening, and then report to related departments in higher governments so as to further revise and improve the NRCMS and form a virtuous circle for implementing the NRCMS.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, three relevant countermeasures are put forward, Strengthening responsibilities by township governments before implementing the NRCMS mainly refers to popularizing ways of the NRCMS and training on related workers; Strengthening responsibilities by township governments when implementing the NRCMS mainly refers to improve performance examination and supervision mechanism of township governments; Strengthening responsibilities by township governments after implementing the NRCMS mainly refers to fully collect and grasp suggestion from the masses to the NRCMS, so as to form a long-term system.

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