

Letter to Editor: Importance of Implementing Resistance Economy Policies in the Field of Medicines and Health Technologies

Ali Sarrafkia^{*1}, Ebrahim Jaafari-pooyan¹, Hosein Dargahi¹

¹Department of Management Sciences & Health Economics, School of Public Health, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran

^{*}Corresponding author: Department of Management Sciences & Health Economics, School of Public Health, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran. asarrafkia@yahoo.com

Received 2021 June 01; Accepted 2021 June 25.

Access to health goods is one of the essential parts of human rights. Iran has experienced several rounds of economic sanctions in recent decades. As can be seen from experience, these sanctions affected the financial relations of Iran with other countries and banking services. As a result, it had adverse effects on the country's production. Although these sanctions have not directly targeted pharmaceutical products, due to the disruption of financial relations, they have affected widespread issues, such as the possibility of importing raw materials, exporting pharmaceutical products, trade cooperation, and partnership with foreign partners in the Iranian medication and health technologies market (1).

Economic pressures can be tolerated with more savings and reliance on domestic production and can even positively influence allocating more market share to domestic products. However, in the case of medicine and health technologies which have special features that distinguish them from other economic sectors, sanctions are different from other sectors.

Since November 2016, Iran's financial and banking relations have been severely restricted by a new round of sanctions. The widespread effects of sanctions on the pharmaceutical industry and the supply of imported medications have become apparent, and Iranian patients face serious challenges, especially patients with specific diseases whose medications or raw materials needed for their medications are imported. According to the statistics published by the Ministry of Health, 97% of the country's quantitative needs are met by domestic industries, and only 3% of the needs of medicines are imported. Rial share of 97% of the country's pharmaceuticals is 70% of the total share of the country's pharmaceutical market, and the 3% that is imported has about 30% of the market value. The majority of domestic products use imported

raw materials, and the increase in raw material prices due to the recession and sanctions has led to a rise in the price of these medicines and their shortage (2).

Resistance economy is the term first used by the Islamic Republic of Iran Supreme Leader in 2010 in a meeting with a group of entrepreneurs, and after that, it was emphasized in several speeches. In a resistance economy, pressure areas are recognized, and the government tries to lift sanctions or make them ineffective. Consequently, rational and prudent management is the main requirement. Unfortunately, the resistance economy in health technologies receives insufficient attention. According to the statistics of the country's pharmaceutical letter, 25,000 billion tomans of drug turnover in the outpatient and inpatient wards is unobservable. Some efforts have been made to achieve a resilient economy in the health system, such as the TTAC system, but this program has many shortcomings and can be easily bypassed. The incompleteness of the system, infrastructural issues (eg, servers and its security), the incomplete implementation of policy, not using reports, and incomplete information have caused almost 13 of the generic medications and almost none of the medical equipment to be recorded (3).

The seventh paragraph of the resistance economy states that ensuring food security and treatment and creating strategic reserves with emphasis on increasing the quantity and quality of production should be the headlines of activities in the field of community health. Resistance economy in the field of medicine can reduce the pressures caused by sanctions in the short term by developing solutions in this field, and in the long run, by developing the right strategies. As a result, self-sufficiency may occur in this strategic field. It is the area of the supply of medicine and medical equipment so that the health system can benefit from it.



References

1. Shahabi S, Fazlalizadeh H, Stedman J, Chuang L, Sharifabrizi A, Ram R. The impact of international economic sanctions on Iranian cancer healthcare. *Health Policy*. 2015;119(10):1309-18.
2. Danaei G, Harirchi I, Sajadi HS, Yahyaei F, Majdzadeh R. The harsh effects of sanctions on Iranian health. *Lancet*. 2019;394(10197):468-9.
3. Sarrafkia A, Nedjat S, Majdzadeh R. Future of Health Technology Assessment System in Iran: Necessity of Reinforcement in Both Scenarios of Continuation or Relief of Sanctions. *Health Technol Assess Action*. 2021.