

### Essay Question

Compare and contrast the Japanese medical insurance system with that of another country that you know, and elaborate on the possible transitions of the Japanese system in the coming years.

### Essay Response

The Japanese medical insurance system requires all individuals residing in Japan to enroll themselves in the national health plan. Whilst other countries like Australia provide a tax-based financing method for their insurance system, Japan continues to facilitate the insurance-based system. Both methods have their pros and cons - tax-based financing ensures that equal medical care can be accessed regardless of geographical locations which is achieved by government intervention. Tax-based financing allows for a more rational and consistent scheme to exist, and in order to deal with it, a stronger sense of obligation is needed. That being said, the tax-based approach creates the problem of a lengthy waiting list for medical care. In addition, if we rely too much on tax revenues for medical service expenditures, fluctuations in tax revenues will make the quality of medical services unstable.

On the other hand, the insurance-based system, which is implemented in Japan's healthcare, is strongly based on the concept of self-responsibility in the sense that individuals are expected to be prepared for future risks by paying insurance premiums. It is believed that if an insurance-based mechanism functions, medical sites will be pushed to treat more patients in order to make more profit. Practically, the idea of receiving medical treatment in return for paying insurance premiums gives the patients a stronger say, and as a result, improves the overall quality of medical care in Japan. Facilities that operate on a tax basis, on the other hand, are not necessarily encouraged to maximize the number of patients they serve as there is no direct correlation between that and their profit.

In conclusion, the Japanese system should not only continue to strive to provide equal healthcare to its population, but also act up the change in demographics, economy and social factors that contribute to the integration of medicine in care. It is vital for the government to plan and execute adaptation strategies for an aging population - if the current system is unchanged, it is thought that the system may collapse because of an imbalance between resources in need and demand.