

U.S. spends more on health care, but isn't healthier

The U.S. health system spends a higher portion of its gross domestic product than any other country -- but ranks only #37 out of 191 countries according to its performance.

That was the shocking news in "The World Health Report 2000," issued by the World Health Organization (WHO) on June 21.

The United Kingdom, which spends just six percent of GDP on health services, ranks 18th . Several small countries -- San Marino, Andorra, Malta and Singapore -- are rated close behind second-placed Italy.

Other findings in the annual WHO report include:

- ▶ In Europe, health systems in Mediterranean countries such as France, Italy and Spain are rated higher than others on the continent. Norway is the highest-ranked Scandinavian nation, at #11.
- ▶ Colombia, Chile, Costa Rica and Cuba are rated highest among the Latin American nations -- 22nd, 33rd, 36th and 39th in the world, respectively.
- ▶ Singapore is ranked #6, the only Asian country apart from Japan in the top 50 countries.
- ▶ In the Pacific, Australia ranks 32nd overall, while New Zealand is 41st.
- ▶ In the Middle East and North Africa, many countries rank highly: Oman is in 8th place overall, Saudi Arabia is ranked 26th, United Arab Emirates 27th and Morocco, 29th.

To rate each country, the health care delivery systems were evaluated on several criteria, including responsiveness, fairness of financial contribution, and overall level of health.

SOURCE: "World Health Report 2000," World Health Organization, June 21, 2000.