

# Effective Care, Quality Perceptions, and the Public System Response to the Needs of Indigenous Population Groups in Latin America. An Equity Perspective from Argentina.

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## Abstract

**Background:** Public health care subsystems in Latin America are usually in charge or providing with effective care to the poor. Although during the last fifteen years the definition of specific packages of services -as a proxy of explicit definitions of rights- were widely discussed, designed and implemented, the concept of quality, generally present in the political agenda, is not necessarily translated into specific policies. Particularly, when the focus is pointed at how to effectively address the needs of coverage of indigenous population groups, the identification of interventions and the definition of quality becomes more challenging, particularly based on perceptions about how to find common grounds of implementation from the formal health care sector. **Objective:** This research is the Argentine chapter, out of a three-country regional agenda. The main goal is to analyze health care strategies in Latin America (Argentina-Mexico-Peru), particularly devoted to identify how public systems address cultural differences, and how they adjust to alternative needs and perceptions of quality care, focusing the analysis in maternal and child health. **Methods:** A qualitative-quantitative research is based on: semi-structured in-depth interviews to public officials, heads of primary health care centers (PHCCs) and public hospitals (PHs), as well as social and community leaders and NGOs in the Province of Salta, Argentina. They are combined with the analysis of four years of administrative information about production and resources based on the Perinatal Information System, the hospital administrative dataset containing detailed information at patient-level on pre-birth consultations, procedures and exams performed, birth characteristics as well as mother and child characteristics, including age, education, and indigenous background. **Results:** the project intends to identify gaps in effective access to care between indigenous and non-indigenous population, beyond income, education and location, as well as how recent implementation of public programs on maternal and child care were able to capture different perceptions on health needs and cultural responses, including them into the policy design. **Conclusion:** health care needs are differently perceived across social and ethnic groups, requiring specific approaches to be addressed. Successful interventions require being resilient to those alternative perceived needs, identifying those differences and incorporating them in the design and the implementation strategy, enhancing responsiveness.

**Keywords:** quality of care – indigenous population – maternal and child health – Latin America

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