The Origins of Primary Health Care

The emergence of Primary Health Care (PHC) in 1978 raised hopes that international health agencies and national actors in developing countries could work together and produce a radical reorganization of health services. Professor Cueto’s paper analyzes the interaction of global and local actors in Latin America and Africa to provide a perspective on the challenges of PHC during the 1980s.

PHC-like ideas date back to at least the early decades of the 20th century. Rural health programs in China developed with the assistance of the Rockefeller Foundation and the League of Nations Health Organization in the 1930s and, along with conferences organized by the latter, brought ideas together and outlined a direction for the future. Dr Litsios’ presentation will indicate how these were built on following World War II and later fed into WHO where they formed the basis of the PHC approach advocated in the 1970s.

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