



## **TURKISH HEALTHCARE POLICIES IN BRIEF**

The Turkish Ministry of Health has been leading Turkey's healthcare system since 1920. The First Minister of Health Dr. Adnan Adıvar's primary focus on healthcare involved treating injuries acquired during the war and developing a national, unprecedented legislation for healthcare. In parallel to the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923, Dr. Refik Saydam was appointed as the second Minister of Health. With his remarkable contributions to establishing and developing the Turkish healthcare services up until 1937 when he resigned, Dr. Saydam became a pioneer in the history of Turkish healthcare policies. Since its debut in 1920, the Ministry of Health has been led by 53 Ministers, the current (53) being Prof. Dr. Recep Akdağ.

The Organization Plan of the Turkish Ministry of Health (hereafter referred to as "MOH") is currently based on the Statutory Decree laying down the "Organization and Duties of the Turkish Ministry of Health" (hereafter referred to as "Decree"), which is in force today. The Decree was first introduced in the Turkish Official Gazette No. 18251 on 14 December 1983 with the following objectives placed under its Article 1 (Table 1):

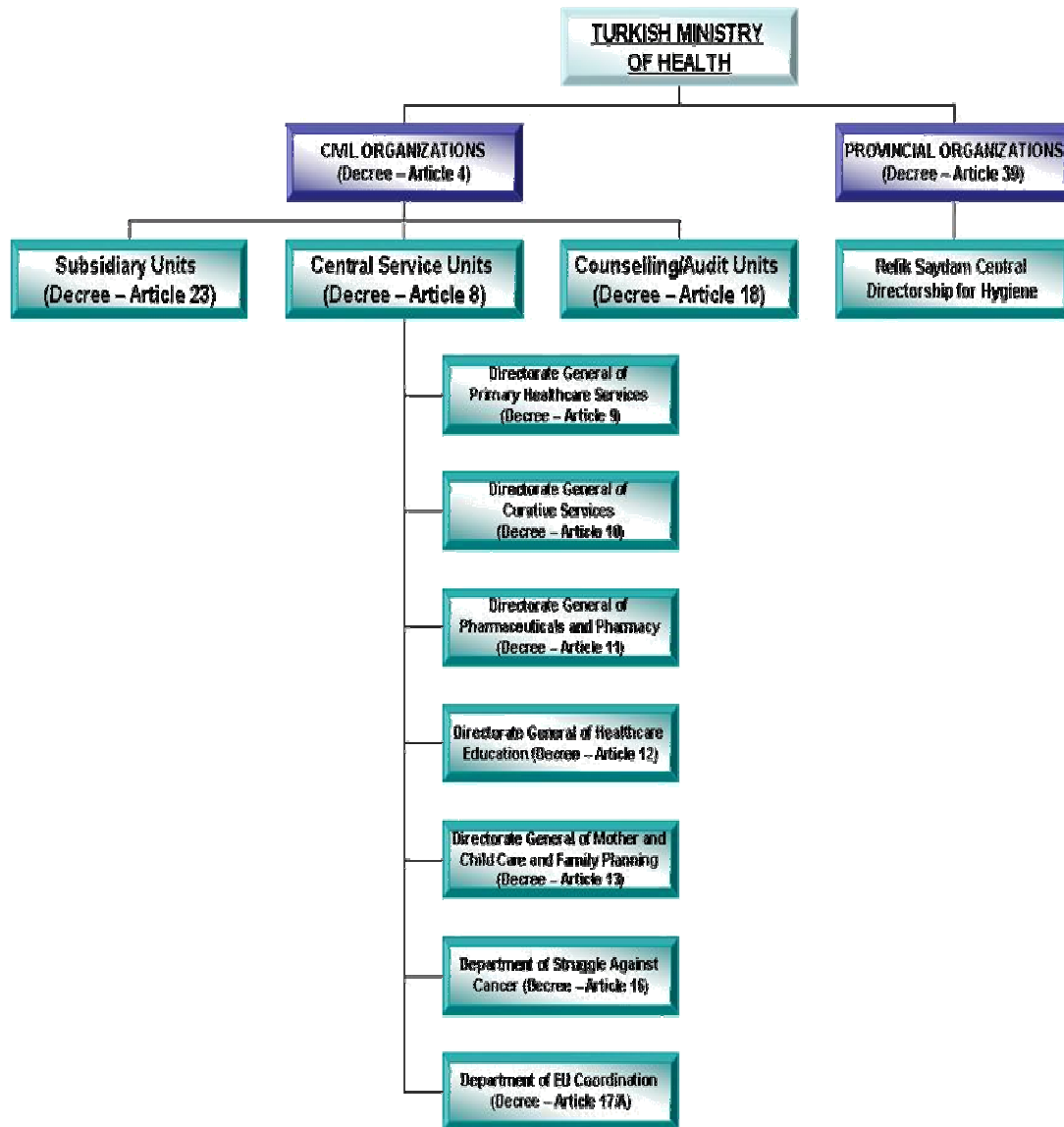
- a) Maintaining consistencies in physical and mental well-being throughout the lifespans of individuals;
- b) Improving the equal public health status within the country;
- c) Struggling with threats posed by potentially hazardous factors towards public health;
- d) Regulating the principles related to the establishment, organization and duties of the MOH, with the intent to:
  - i) Plan each and every healthcare body solely under one authority;

- ii) Ensure a standard supply of healthcare services from these bodies;
- iii) Provide public access to healthcare services; and,
- iv) Promote easy and appropriate public access to healthcare services.

Preliminary duties and responsibilities of the MOH, placed under Article 2 of the Decree, are summarized below as:

- a) Maintaining consistencies in physical and mental well-being:
  - i) Constitution, implementation and promotion of plans and programs targeting equal health status of the public;
  - ii) Management of all necessary public measures;
  - iii) Establishment and promotion of relevant organizational bodies.
- b) Providing services related to:
  - i) Preventive, curative practices and rehabilitation opportunities in struggling with communicable, epidemic and social diseases;
  - ii) Protecting mother and child healthcare, and family planning.
- c) Inspecting and:
  - i) Managing stages of manufacturing processes and consumption of medicinal products, sedative/hypnotic products and psychotropic substances;
  - ii) Laying down the principles and standard operation procedures (SOPs) for manufacturing and distribution sites where pharmaceutical and medicinal substances and chemical substances are produced.
- d) Providing services in the areas of:
  - i) Manufacturing, promotion and, if deemed necessary, importing processes of particular vaccines, sera, and blood and medicinal products;
  - ii) Struggle against cancer, tuberculosis and malaria;
  - iii) Coordination and inspection of associations and institutions related to cancer, tuberculosis and malaria services.

- e) Establishing and operating sites which are focused on performing the activities listed above.
- f) Educating and training healthcare professionals.
- g) Collaborating with all relevant national and international associations and institutions, under the scope of healthcare services.



**Table 1:** Main units operating under the organization plan of the Turkish Ministry of Health

The General Directorates of Primary Healthcare Services, Curative Services, Pharmaceuticals and Pharmacy, Healthcare Education,

Mother and Child Healthcare and Family Planning; the Departments of Struggle Against Cancer and EU Coordination; and the Refik Saydam Central Directorship for Hygiene (established under Articles 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17/A, and 39 of the Decree, respectively) were established under the provisions of the Decree, sharing the main duties and responsibilities exclusive to their regulations as listed in order of sequence as such:

a) Education:

- Taking necessary measures in the development of national healthcare education up to an upgraded scientific and technological level;
- Determining methods and techniques implemented in education;
- Supplying necessary devices and tools, and other means used within the national education standards;
- Improving current education programs;
- Preparing lesson schedules for newly launched departments and faculties related to the field of medicine and healthcare;
- Improving, expanding and enhancing the legislation on healthcare education;
- Managing investigation, approval and operation regarding diplomas granted to those healthcare professionals from national and international faculties;
- Promoting formation of relevant faculty graduates in the field of public health;
- Educating specialists, and organizing studies related to public health personnel at national level;
- Establishing and providing education in the field of public health, especially in the field of oncology;
- Providing necessary education services to the public in the struggle for cancer, in collaboration with relevant associations and institutions;
- Arranging MOH personnel participation in scientific meetings and courses.

b) Research:

- Promoting conduct of scientific research;
- Performing research and analyses on environmental pollution;
- Producing various sera and vaccines, and preparing other biological and chemical preparations;
- Evaluating outcomes of accomplished scientific research studies;
- Raising laboratory animals within adequate quality and quantity limits for control, reproduction and research activities;
- Performing 4-phased clinical trials in general hospitals.

c) International Collaboration:

- Providing EU coordination regarding issues linked to operations of the MOH;
- Assisting collaborational studies of the Ministry which is in charge of EU relations;
- Conducting national and international projects on adaptation of, harmonization with and implementation of EU policies;
- Maintaining international and national collaboration in investigation, research and scientific publications.

d) National Public Healthcare Services:

- Ensuring supply of all healthcare services;
- Managing public contribution to and participation under issues regarding healthcare services;
- Promoting the wide-spread distribution of healthcare services throughout the country;
- Promoting vaccination and immunization services on prevention and struggling against communicable, epidemic, social and degenerative diseases (e.g. numerous types of cancer);
- Determining objectives in relation to mothers' and their children's healthcare, and family planning, in order to:
  - i) Plan and implement study initiatives;
  - ii) Promote their physical and mental well-being;

- iii) Provide curative services to families before, during and after pregnancy.
- Granting permission to and inspecting operations under the determined standards led by associations and institutions, individual and private legal bodies, and volunteering associations in the struggle against cancer;
- Establishing in-hospital associations and healthcare institutions branched from these institutions under the supervision of the MOH, in order to:
  - i) Enhance capacities of;
  - ii) Promote all financial, administrative procedures implemented under;
  - iii) Monitor, conduct and, when deemed necessary, lock away such associations and institutions.
- Managing collaboration between village clinics and in-hospital associations
- Coordinating scientific service units, listed below, under the Central Directorship for Hygiene:
  - i. Biological Substance Production Laboratories;
  - ii. Diagnosis Laboratories;
  - iii. Nutritional, Pharmaceutical and Biological Substance Control Laboratories;
  - iv. Public Healthcare Management and Educational Sciences Unit;
  - v. Epidemiological Education Research Unit.

e) Disease Prevention:

- Determining a reporting-based diseases list for the prevention and management of communicable and epidemic diseases, defining relevant events and cases;
- Establishing an early warning and response system operating in the national struggle against and management of communicable and epidemic diseases;
- Assuring protection measures and providing a secure working environment for civil personnel in charge of studies in the field of oncology;

- Performing epidemiological field practices and laboratory inspections regarding early diagnosis, disease prevention and treatment.

f) Medical Diagnosis:

- Establishing diagnostic laboratories operating within the framework of diagnosis, surveillance and control of reporting-based communicable and epidemic diseases;
- Managing reference laboratories in utilization of various analysis, control and production methods;
- Assuring general examination and immediate transfer to professional healthcare centers for early diagnosis of cases with potential risks of cancer.

g) Ethical Issues, Evaluation and Responsibilities:

- All individuals, associations or institutions planning to conduct all types of pre-clinical and clinical research using any licensed or non-licensed product are obliged submit research protocol along with all other relevant documentation to the MOH for approval;
- Local ethics committees are obliged to submit “clinical research protocols” of planned projects to the Central Ethics Committee in the MOH for detailed evaluation, approval and posing opinion on follow-up procedures;
- The Helsinki Declaration and the Turkish Medical Deontology Regulation are the basis of human clinical trials.

h) Public Acknowledgement and Confidentiality/Transparency Boards:

- The public is informed regarding measures to be taken in the occurrence of communicable and epidemic diseases. Relevant parties are acknowledged immediately upon the termination of such a public health threat;
- Privacy, actual and moral existence, principle rights and independencies of individuals are protected during storage of

- individual data retrieved from information obtained by the epidemiological surveillance and the reporting system;
- Sufficient safety measures are deemed mandatory for data protection regarding coding and separate reservation of addresses and identities of cordon blood donors and HLA (human leucocyte antigen) type information;
  - None of the below medicinal products may be advertised to the public:
    - i) Non-licensed or non-permitted products
    - ii) Products indicated for use in tuberculosis, sexually transmitted diseases, serious septic diseases, all types of cancer, insomnia, diabetes and other metabolic diseases
    - iii) Reimbursed products
  - No medicinal product or cord blood may be advertized, if ever directly, to the public. Medicinal products other than those listed above are advertised to healthcare professionals, within certain limits. The most important step in advertisement of a medicinal product is license/permission holders' submissions to the scientific opinion of the MOH regarding the targeted population and the planned initial announcement dates of such products;
  - Members currently, or those who have been, assigned to any of the Scientific Advisory Committees in the MOH, shall remain confidential in the context of restraining from exposure or release of commercial, scientific and technical knowledge provided under undisclosed information or documents exclusive to related associations and institutions, for the aims of their individual benefits or for or against third parties.

j) Scientific Evaluation:

- A permanent Scientific Committee of the Central Directorship for Hygiene, dedicated to fostering, planning and improving scientific research, poses opinion on the annual meeting schedule of the coming year and gives suggestions on the

- scientific formation of technical personnel, assistants and specialists;
- A permanent Genetic Diseases Committee gets together three times during the year for the evaluation of launching, inspection and cancellation procedures of genetic diagnosis centers;
  - A Coordination Committee dedicated to the surveillance and control procedures of communicable and epidemic diseases, and standardization and solidarity of knowledge in the reporting system of epidemiological surveillance. This Committee works along with the Surveillance and Laboratory Services Sub-committees;
  - The National Cord Blood Coordination Committee (Ulusal Kordon Kani Koordinasyon Kurulu – UKOK) dedicated to determination of the educational standards of and setting the principles of certification education for physicians and other relevant healthcare professionals to be assigned to cord blood banking procedures;
  - A permanent Advisory Committee dedicated to the Evaluation of Human Medicinal Products During Pre- and Post-Licensing Processes is gathered regularly for posing scientific opinion on licensing applications of non-licensed human medicinal products, license renewals, variations, added indications for use, etc. on licensed medicinal products, and prescription classification and conditions of use of both non-licensed and licensed medicinal products;
  - A permanent Advisory Committee dedicated to the Technological and Pharmacological Evaluation of Human Medicinal Products During Pre-Licensing Processes is gathered regularly for posing scientific opinion on licensing applications and labelling information of medicinal products;
  - A permanent Advisory Committee dedicated to the Bioavailability and Bioequivalency Evaluation of Human Medicinal Products During Pre-Licensing Processes is gathered regularly for posing scientific opinion on bioavailability and bioequivalence of medicinal products;
  - An ad hoc Advisory Committee dedicated to the Pharmaceutical Evaluation of Human Medicinal Products is

gathered for posing scientific opinion on issues regarding radiopharmaceutical products manufactured domestically and imported from foreign countries;

- A permanent Advisory Committee dedicated to the Monitoring and Evaluation of Human Medicinal Products is gathered regularly for posing scientific opinion on revision of licensing/permission information, withdrawal, suspension and cancellation actions regarding medicinal products;
- Performing preliminary examination, all types of microbiological, serological, parasitological, physical and chemical evaluation, on medicinal products, and determination of contraindications and indications for use related to these products;
- Quality control management of samples belonging to human medicinal products readily available in the market;
- An ad hoc Advisory Committee dedicated to the Pharmacoeconomical Evaluation of Human Medicinal Products is gathered for posing scientific opinion on “cost- effectiveness, benefit, indications for use and minimization” in pricing of medicinal products.

k) Patient Access to Treatment Alternatives:

- Providing access to non-licensed medicinal products at education hospitals, accredited government hospitals and Class A1 private hospitals, regardless of the phase sequence of the applied clinical trials, on grounds of humanitarian aid, on a case-by-case basis to patients possessing drawbacks in being included in related clinical trials, who have been suffering from urgent, serious, debilitating and life-threatening diseases, and have not manifested improvement during previous treatment interventions with readily licensed and accessible medicinal products, by the help of the free-of-charge compassionate use program;
- Granting permission and/or license in manufacturing, export and marketing authorization procedures for medicinal products indicated for use in humans for the treatment of various diseases;

- Defining launching and operational principles for and conduct of necessary inspection at sites in charge of manufacturing and distribution processes, and storage warehouses and pharmacies for the delivery of medicinal products;
- Providing consistent and sustainable access of the public to medicinal products, with high quality and reasonable pricing margins;
- Conducting necessary controls on quality and pricing assessment of medicinal products
- Under the scope of the national Pharmaceutical and Medicinal Preparations Law No. 1262, the MOH has given official rights to the Turkish Pharmacists' Association (Turk Eczacilari Birligi – TEB) to intermediate supply of imported medicinal products to the use of patients whose prescriptions have been approved by the MOH;
- A “Green Card” and “Green Healthcare Booklet” is issued to those patients settled in Turkey who:
  - i. Do not possess social security rights provided by the Social Security Association (Sosyal Guvenlik Kurulu – SGK), and/or;
  - ii. Whose monthly wages fall under the limit determined at government level.

#### 1) Surveillance and Follow-up:

- Providing the use of proper tools and devices in epidemiological surveillance of communicable and epidemic diseases;
- Developing disease-specific surveillance and control methods for communicable and epidemic diseases;
- In the field of communicable and epidemic diseases, establishing necessary surveillance and control programs, and allocating relevant local centers of focus and operating systems for communicable and epidemic diseases;
- Participating in international disease-specific surveillance networks for communicable and epidemic diseases;
- When deemed necessary, establishing and managing specific surveillance and control programs for certain diseases;

- For cases of cancer, at the least frequency, annual surveillance program planning, implementation, patient monitoring and evaluation;
- Managing surveillance of readily determined cancer target groups;
- Holding full responsibility of monitoring suspected cancer cases along with those having applied at a late stage;
- Providing social, psychological and medical support to diagnosed cancer patients;
- Systemic side effect or adverse drug event (ADR) monitoring for licensed or non-licensed medicinal products which are either included in pre-clinical or clinical trials, compassionate use program or under prescription approval.

m) Data Collection:

- Evaluation of information collected from the epidemiological surveillance and the reporting system of communicable and epidemic diseases;
- Providing communication with networks belonging to international associations and societies, for the early warning and response system of communicable and epidemic diseases;
- Determining ways to share epidemiological data for communicable and epidemic diseases on national and international levels;
- Maintaining appropriate software-hardware programs and web access for archiving cord blood information, and if deemed necessary, for data management and data sharing at national and international levels;
- Collecting all statistical information on emerging cancer cases;
- Central archiving of all oncology applications in addition to those kept in the hospitals;
- Collecting ADR reportings having to do with patients subjected to the compassionate use program, in order to assess the benefits of the treatment in question;
- Promoting healthcare professionals in feeding back serious and/or unexpected ADRs revealing evidence related to or suspected in the use of medicinal products;

- Information collection and archiving, and managing contact and information sharing between associations and institutions.

n) Patient Safety:

- Determining factors related to animal well-being, food safety and environmental health in the prevention of communicable and epidemic diseases;
- Allocating adequate equipment and laboratories, and experienced personnel for clinical trials;
- Providing continuation of treatment with non-licensed medicinal products to those patients included in the compassionate use program and who have benefited from outcomes of treatment with the specific medicinal products, until the treatment is completed or license is granted to such products;
- Providing safe use of medicinal products and taking necessary measures in mitigation of potential risk factors by systemic adverse drug event monitoring, information collection and archiving, and managing contact and information sharing between associations and institutions.

In 2002, a national “Health Transformation Program” was launched by the final consent of Prof. Akdag in order to improve the national healthcare system. The re-structuring component of this Program which is still running aims to fulfill the MOH’s mission as the independent authority of the Turkish healthcare policies. In this vision, healthcare standards are developed, monitored and screened, and national sources will be supported more effectively. As major amendments have been made during the past 7 years, this program is projected to be sustained as long as amelioration in the national healthcare system continues.

All information contained in this document was compiled by Pelin KILIC, M.Sc., Pharm. from the related links listed below:

[www.saglik.gov.tr](http://www.saglik.gov.tr)  
[www.rshm.saglik.gov.tr](http://www.rshm.saglik.gov.tr)  
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