




Science, Justice, and Health Equity: The Overlooked Legacy of Ayatollah Khamenei

Kamran B Lankarani ^{1,*}

¹ Health Policy Research Center, Institute of Health, Shiraz University of Medical Sciences, Shiraz, Iran

* **Corresponding Author:** Health Policy Research Center, Institute of Health, Shiraz University of Medical Sciences, Shiraz, Iran. Email: lankaran@sums.ac.ir

Received: 9 May, 2026; **Accepted:** 9 May, 2026

Keywords: Health Equity, Scientific Self-Sufficiency, Iran Health Policy

The late Ayatollah Imam Khamenei is widely recognized for his steadfast resistance to global superpowers and his unwavering support for oppressed populations, from Bosnia to Gaza. However, his profound and often underappreciated contributions to scientific advancement and health equity in Iran warrant serious attention from the global medical community.

Scientific Empowerment as a National Imperative

Ayatollah Khamenei firmly believed that national sovereignty depends on scientific self-sufficiency. He argued that without indigenous scientific capacity, Iran would remain a consumer of foreign knowledge, a position that would inevitably lead to political subservience. To counter this, he actively supported Iran's stem cell and nanotechnology programs. He launched a software movement within universities to align scientific research with national needs and established the Science-Based Enterprise Support Program, which facilitated the development of thousands of knowledge-intensive companies across the country.

Health Policy and Equity: A Foundational Commitment

More than a decade ago, Ayatollah Khamenei introduced fundamental health policies rooted in a simple yet profound principle: individuals suffering from disease or disability should not endure pain or distress beyond that caused by their medical condition alone (1). He championed the national insurance program and the local production of generic drugs. During his presidency in the Iran-Iraq War, he supported

the creation of a primary health care network, a system whose importance for high-quality, equity-based health care he continued to emphasize in later years.

Addressing the Social Determinants of Health

In a meeting with the Commission on Social Determinants of Health in January 2006, Ayatollah Khamenei identified health as one of humanity's most fundamental needs. He observed that despite vast scientific progress, global health remains precarious, as social threats to well-being have multiplied significantly. He attributed contemporary health crises, including hunger, the spread of narcotics and alcohol, sexual promiscuity, and the psychological impact of global propaganda, to the injustice, discrimination, and egoism of the world's major powers.

Notably, Ayatollah Khamenei praised the World Health Organization's initiative to form a commission on social determinants of health, describing it as a valuable effort. However, he cautioned that any comprehensive approach to health must incorporate morality and religious faith, which he viewed as essential sources of inner peace. He noted that various religions, particularly Islam, offer indispensable guidance on hygiene and social factors affecting health, guidance that remains underutilized.

Progress and the Path Ahead

Following the Islamic Revolution, Iran achieved significant improvements in health indicators. Yet much remains to be done to reach an ideal state (2). Much of this progress can be attributed to the leadership of the late Ayatollah Khamenei. With justice as a central pillar of the nation, he remained concerned

that further beneficial measures should continue to advance health and hygiene indicators.

Conclusions

Ayatollah Khamenei's concern for health was inseparable from his concern for equity. He loved his people and dedicated his efforts to serving the most vulnerable. His martyrdom occurred not in a palace, but among the very people he sought to protect, a final testament to a life devoted to science, justice, and human dignity.

Footnotes

AI Use Disclosure: The authors declare that no generative AI tools were used in the creation of this article.

Authors' Contribution: Kamran B Lankarani is the only author of the article, and the study was solely carried out by the author.

Conflict of Interests Statement: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Funding/Support: The author declares no funding/support for this study.

References

1. Lankarani K. Health in Iran; 40 Years After the Islamic Revolution. *Shiraz E-Medical Journal*. 2019;**In Press**(In Press). <https://doi.org/10.5812/semj.89606>.
2. Lankarani KB, Alavian SM, Peymani P. Health in the Islamic Republic of Iran, challenges and progresses. *Med J Islam Repub Iran*. 2013;**27**(1):42-9. [PubMed ID: [23479501](#)]. [PubMed Central ID: [PMC3592943](#)].