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Objectives: To analyze continuity/discontinuity processes in health programs and policies implemented in Mexico during the 1990s and the early twenty-first century, and compare them to those of the 1980s.

Methodology: Explanatory analytical.

Results: The author states that in spite of the changes which began in Mexico in the 1980s and continue to the present day, there has been continuity in the application of health policy characterized by decentralization, cuts in health spending, and commercialization and privatization of health care services. The author maintains that social and economic inequalities have dominated the course of health-illness/health care processes throughout the period. The "adjustments" begun by the federal government in the early 1980s to redistribute and reduce health spending have delivered health care budgets increasingly into the hands of the states and municipalities. Neoliberal policies continued during the 1990s and the process of decentralization came to an end, although it was more administrative in nature since it was accompanied by scant funding transfers, which jeopardized the financial sustainability of health care services in the poorest states. Budget allocations to social security were also reduced, stimulating the privatization of health care services. The same trends have continued in the opening years of the current decade.

Conclusions: The author concludes that policies initiated in the 1980s and continued during the period analyzed have consistently involved inadequate government spending on health. He underlines the fact that the new government which replaced the Institutional Revolutionary Party has continued to apply the same strategies based on neoliberal policies.