

076: VIEWS OF EUROPEAN CITIZENS ON SELECTED HEALTH POLICY TOPICS

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Objective:

To examine health policy dilemmas through the eyes of the patient and the citizen

Methods:

Literature reviews, focus groups and telephone surveys were carried out in eight European countries to explore European citizens' views of their health systems, the role of health professionals, access to information and advice, new treatments and tests, patient autonomy, and public involvement in policy-making. Participants included randomly selected samples of 1,000 adults in Germany, Italy, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK (total = 8,000), plus focus groups of patients in each of these countries.

Results:

Europeans remain highly satisfied with primary care, but they have concerns about access, equity, costs and co-payments. There is high demand for more health information, but the internet is not yet making a significant impact. Patients want more support for self-care, more involvement in treatment decisions, and more provider choices.

Conclusions:

Many Europeans are pessimistic about the future of their health systems. As patients and as citizens they want to play a more active role in their own care and in shaping policy developments. Policy-makers should keep abreast of public opinion to maintain confidence and ensure the sustainability of health systems. They should promote partnerships between patients and health professionals, invest in information and advice, improve access and continuity through skill-mix changes and patient-held records, publish performance indicators and offer choice of providers.

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