The Value of Health: Improving Outcomes

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The Value of Health
Political and policy context

Economic context:
• Legacy of the crisis: high debts and deficits
• Continued increases in public health spending anticipated
• Concerns about how this will be paid for (sustainability of public finances)

Population health:
• Ageing and rising levels of chronic disease and comorbidity
• Public health problems and inequalities

Health systems:
• Challenge of responding to changing population needs
• Need for structural reforms – e.g. integrated care, eHealth
• Evidence of marked variation in clinical practices and significant levels of ‘waste’
Value based health care as a solution

Focus on health outcomes measurement
Enhancing Value in European Health Systems: The role of outcomes measurement

Foreword

This Vision Document is not just an interesting report – it is a compelling illustration of the role of health for Europe’s sustainable growth and prosperity; a convincing call for a stronger focus on the outcomes of health systems to improve the quality of care and public health – and a clear demonstration of the importance of measuring those outcomes for greater transparency and accountability for health system performance.

Good health is beneficial to our economies and societies; healthy citizens are more productive, work longer and more continuously; a healthier population with longer life expectancy is more prone to invest, including in human capital.

But there is a simpler, more important factor that justifies the importance given to health in the policy debate in Europe: irrespective of its contribution to the economy, health is a value in itself – and that’s why we have to do our best to help people maintain and improve their health. With this goal in mind, the European Commission adopted in 2014 an agenda for Europe’s health systems, proposing actions to help countries strengthen their effectiveness, increase their accessibility, and improve their confidence.

I am happy and reassured to see that this Vision Document confirms many of the key findings we identified, while at the same time proposing new interesting and valuable recommendations on how to move forward.

It is hard to disagree with the key assumption that drives the report: if we want to improve the performance of our health systems, we have to first assess them. And in particular, we should focus on measuring outcomes; this will give us the perspective of European citizens in understanding the quality and effectiveness of health services.

Most of the indicators we use today focus on inputs and processes. In some occasions, we measure outputs, such as the number of operations. But what really matters for citizens and patients are outcomes: it is not the number of operations, it’s their result.

In some areas, we already collect some statistics on outcomes, as pointed out in this Vision Document. In these cases we are marked variations - both between countries and within them. We know that variations mean possibilities of improvement: this gives us a stimulus to build more solid evidence.

"Measuring outcomes is close to a change of paradigm: it will require time and dedication, and a common effort by all players in this field."
Multi-stakeholder proposition

Using health outcomes measurement to enhance value

Paradigm shift
From inputs & processes to health outcomes

Measure health outcomes
Improve quality of care | Inform policy

Enhance value in health systems
Better health outcomes | More efficient use of resources

1. Analysis of health outcomes variation – for learning & improvement

2. Improving integrated care & care pathways through outcomes measurement

3. Reducing waste and improving health system efficiency
Data Challenges

- Avoiding excessive / overly burdensome data collection requirements
- Are we collecting the right data? Clinical relevance & patient centricity
- Data governance frameworks to ensure privacy protective data use
Focus on Patient-Reported Outcome Measures

What are PROMs? Standardised instruments to ascertain patients’ views about their health and health-related quality of life.

Benefits:

• performance monitoring & improvement;
• patient-clinician communication;
• shared decision-making.

OECD Recommendations to Health Ministers (2017):

“a European consortium has developed a consensus document in 2016 to facilitate the use of PROMs by EU Member States to measure health system performance. The report highlights the importance of international quality comparisons as a means to identify best practice across countries, and to trigger quality improvement initiatives at a national level”