



Italian Observatory on Healthcare Report 2018

Health status and quality of care in the Italian Regions

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Introduction

The indicators analyzed in this Osservasalute Report show how the Italian National Health Service (NHS) is struggling to balance the need to control expenditure and maintain the high quality of care achieved in our country.

Regarding public health spending, global data and international comparisons show that the Italian NHS has been acting thriftily and has managed to stop the traditional growing nature of expenditure, in line with the limited national resources. This result was achieved despite the pressure on the health system coming from ageing population, the costs related to technological progress and the forms of socio-economic deprivation resulting from the economic crisis. However, the consolidation measures have been obtained partially by reducing health services and the number of health professionals.

The collected evidence suggests that the consolidation policies of the last years have lost their original potential and that it is possible to predict a rise in health expenditure in the future to provide citizens with more effective assistance, through the provision of services incorporating technological innovation from the last years.

The health condition of the Italians is good when it comes to life expectancy rates, but there are small signs of improvement in the indicators describing diseases whose development is majorly affected by prevention and lifestyles. In particular, negative trends are described for the prevalence or incidence of some tumors caused by smoking habits, obesity and low adherence to screening programs.

Another alarming element which emerges from this Report is the quality of life among the elderly; the international comparisons show that the years that we have gained in terms of survival rate is associated with a number of years spent in poor health which are higher than those of the main European countries (France, Spain, Germany and Sweden).

The Osservasalute Report has contributed for years to inform the debate on these topics, drawing the attention on some key points which we believe will be extremely relevant in the future; in particular, the ability to keep the current standards of healthcare and the political sustainability of the National Health Service. The wide range of indicators developed and analyzed in the Report promotes a culture of measurement of interventions and planning in evidence-based policy-making.

This year's edition includes a chapter on the future scenarios, as we believe that the complexity of our reality not only needs an accurate knowledge of the present scenario, but also the ability to predict future trends, in order to better plan prompt interventions.

318 Authors, who have discussed an increasing number of issues and problematic aspects, have contributed to the production of the Report.

This Report is structured as follows:

- **85 Core indicators**, through which the essential health aspects of the Italian population and the health services in all the Regions of our country are described, also with the help of graphs, tables and cartograms;
- **33 Boxes**, focusing on some innovative experiences in some topics;
- **2 Analyses**, in which some key problems are discussed and possible solutions are presented (available on www.osservatoriosullasalute.it).

In addition to producing indicators and evaluations, the Report offers a series of recommendations to policy-makers and health professionals, result of the global approach that characterizes the volume.

Among the most concerning “Osservasalute Recommendations”, we highlight the importance of giving attention to the increase in private health expenditure in the Italian Regions, in order to prevent private health from becoming a substitute, rather than an integration, of a public health system.

It is important to promote actions to fight unhealthy lifestyles, to intensify primary prevention strategies and to enhance the organization and territorial coverage of effective screening tests for cancer, also to fill the gap between North and South Italy.

The increasing problems of frailty in older people require the adoption of better organizational models, aimed at improving the clinical condition and the functional status, reducing the symptoms, preventing disability and improving the quality of life. To reach these goals it is essential to define new long term pathways for these patients, to prevent and limit the disabilities and guarantee the continuity of care and the integration of socio-medical interventions.

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