

Organization of Health Care in Croatia: Needs and Priorities

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Aim. Description and analysis of the present situation of health care system in Croatia, and its characteristics in the transitional process of restructuring.

Methods. A descriptive method was used. The data from the regular statistical publications were used for the analysis.

Results. Croatia is faced with problems similar to those in other countries of the Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), such as control of health expenditure, balancing the development of different segments of health care services, stabilization of effectiveness and quality of care, transition from one-party system to pluralistic democracy, introduction of a free market economy, war devastations, etc. On the other hand, the Croatian experience in the development of a decentralized and integrated primary health care, decentralized health insurance system, education of general/family practitioners, and a tradition in the implementation and development of public health measures, have facilitated and contributed positively to the whole process of transition.

Conclusion. In contrast to the economic difficulties, war devastations, and changing the social system, the Croatian health care system proved its stability and sustainability. The highest priority and needs are now related to coping with unhealthy behavior of the population, such as smoking, accidents, physical inactivity, and nutritional problems, which should be solved and controlled by the implementation of preventive programs, organization and management of public health services, and further focusing onto the integrated type of primary health care in the organization of services. Hospital services need more intensive and skilled management, as well as support measures for better quality of work.

Key words: assessment of health care needs; death rate; Croatia; health care economics and organizations; morbidity; public health; vaccination; war