

International Comparison of Health Outcome as Support for Healthcare Policy

Dear readers,

In this issue of the journal, we have decided to present papers focusing on the health and social effects of substance use, as well as drawing attention to financial aspects, which are significantly related to the sustainability of health systems. In the last decade, the attention of international and national research teams has also focused on the excessive use of the internet and computer games, however problematic the quantification of their negative health, social, and economic impacts may be. What needs to be considered, in this respect, is the heterogeneity of the social groups and the factors that influence the origin and development of these addictions. The processes of demographic aging defined in the global framework predict growing demands on health systems and the need to secure resources for their sustainability. One efficient way of doing this is through prevention programmes, which, if correctly designed for the target population, can bring significant health and economic benefits for the health system of each country. There are no unified methodologies for creating prevention programmes that could be shared between countries and are ready to be applied. The processes of their development depend to a large extent on the relevant national health policy and correctly defined health needs of the target population, health literacy, and the proper monitoring of the demand for healthcare too. This requires good national data registers and active institutional cooperation.

These consistent facts are also the subject of a broader discussion platform in the papers that form the contents of this issue. In the first paper, attention is focused on the already-mentioned issue of the excessive use of the internet and computer games in socially excluded communities in Slovakia. The empirical research carried out by its authors brought interesting findings. Comparative analysis performed on the basis of the results obtained from the respondents from the majority population and the respondents from socially excluded communities provided valuable information for the creation of active prevention programmes and for health policy makers at both the regional and national levels.

A macroeconomic perspective on the impact of alcohol consumption in the European Union member states and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development member states is the subject of the second study in this issue of the journal. Its author performed a multivariate analysis of alcohol consumption and alcohol-related death rates in the territory under consideration, with her attention being focused on mortality resulting from liver cirrhosis, cancer, and road traffic fatalities. Life expectancies in the 41 EU and OECD member countries were also included in the analysis. The results of the analyses in the study were aggregated into clusters in order to identify the main

patterns for the countries in each cluster. The findings as to what levels of alcohol consumption affect different levels of alcohol-related mortality are particularly noteworthy. The study encourages a deeper examination of the factors influencing the different levels of health and economic impacts of alcoholism in the individual countries. These also explain the discrepancies in the national health policies and in prevention programmes. Additionally, the cultural, political, and social determinants influencing the level of alcohol addiction among the population play an important role here.

These aspects are explored by the third article, the aim of which was to compare health spending and the critical health determinants between the years 2000 and 2017. Studying these determinants, the authors also examined the impact of alcohol and tobacco consumption. They point out the increasing financial demands of healthcare systems in relation to the processes of global aging, which are distinctive in each country.

In addition to the financial demands, the processes of demographic aging also affect healthcare demand and supply. It is monitored and evaluated by many institutions in the country and its quality is mainly assessed through patient satisfaction. This fact is also pointed out by the authors of another paper, focused on the identification of the success factors of hospital management in Slovakia through selected techniques. Although the study does not differentiate between discrepancies in the perception of the success factors of hospital management in public, private, and specialised hospitals, the results provide a potential for examining both procedural and territorial differences in the success factors of various types of hospitals that may affect the availability of healthcare and differences in the demand for it. Questions that arise in this respect include the potential effects of successful hospital management on the quality of healthcare services and migration trends which may be due to the demand for high-quality specialised healthcare within the individual regions of the country. Hence, we stand at the root of the issue of regional differences in the demand for healthcare. This demand is very closely linked to the morbidity of the population, which is affected by various determinants of health. Numerous research studies report regional disparities in the health of the population within the individual regions of countries, while optimal health policy settings are not enough to alleviate them.

This fact is also pointed out by the results of the latest study that aims to examine whether the probability of dying because of neoplasms and circulatory diseases is higher in tobacco smokers than non-smokers. Again, the authors employed cluster analysis to compare the regions, using the number of deaths related to neoplasms and diseases of the circulatory system. The study offers several implications for the development of active health policies. It also creates

space for exploring new determinants affecting the different mortality rates associated with smoking. The shift in the onset of tobacco addiction towards younger age categories calls for a deeper examination of regional disparities in mortality caused by this addiction in terms of specific age categories. Gaining an understanding of the greatest disparities in the particular age categories between the individual regions can improve the development of region-specific prevention programmes, as well as reviewing the effectiveness of the tools to eliminate smoking addiction in the regions.

Addiction to addictive substances among the population is a multidimensional issue which covers a wide interdisciplinary range and its importance is constantly growing. To quantify the effects of legal and illegal drug use and gambling is methodologically extremely demanding. Among other things, it is complicated by working with a precarious database and the insufficient implementation of primary research which focuses on several aspects of the emergence and development of addiction among the population. Therefore, it is important to support research teams in carrying out research activities and sharing results for further research and practice in order to improve national and international cooperation and support for the institutions that are responsible for the preparation and implementation of active drug policies. And the *Adiktologie* journal seeks to be of assistance in achieving this goal. In addition to publishing the results of research studies, it contributes to addressing these challenging substance use-related issues by supporting the development of cooperation between teams of researchers and experts both nationally and internationally.

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