

E.A.N.A. Spring Meeting 2013

17th/18th May 2013, Prague

NATIONAL REPORT – AUSTRIA

1. HEALTH REFORM

As already mentioned in earlier national reports the Austrian federal government, the federal provinces and the social health insurance funds have been planning a health care reform without consulting and involving patients and the medical chamber; this reform will have a major impact on medical practice.

In the meantime the health care reform was agreed upon by the Council of Ministers and is now on its way to the plenary session of the national council (Nationalrat) and the federal council.

The health care reform was sharply criticized not only by the Austrian Medical Chamber but also by the Court of Auditors.

It focuses mainly on fiscal objectives and reduction of resources. Savings are expected by introducing a federal budget for health, joint planning, financing and management of the health system. The Austrian Medical Chamber has expressed great concern about the fact that spending on health will be bound to the average growth of the GDP, since it does not take into account the individual particular patient's needs and the future development of medicine.

The Austrian Medical Chamber, for its part, has developed a health policy program. This reform concept foresees among other key points strengthening of the health care system on behalf of the patients, better coordination between general practitioners and specialists in free practice to guarantee better treatment of patients. The basis of an optimal primary care is the repositioning of the GP as a trust doctor as a first contact to the health care system. Outpatient and inpatient care are to be funded from two different sources.

2. COUNTRY DOCTORS

In Austria, country doctors are an endangered species; in rural areas in particular, many practice vacancies cannot be refilled.

There are claims for better conditions for group practices, as well as better working conditions including working time which would allow women to opt for such an activity.

There are various reasons for this development: on the one hand, there are insufficient young doctors, on the other hand, many young colleagues do not like to live in the country and, furthermore, 80% of country doctors are male. At present, however, women outnumber men among doctors in training.

The objective is to enhance the attractiveness of the profession (by means of financial incentives, childcare facilities, de-bureaucratisation, financing of teaching practices in both, the country and the town), in addition, it is important to insure that dispensing by self-employed doctors in rural areas will be maintained.

As from the end of 2013, a law amendment made it possible to open a public pharmacy in communities hosting more than one practice under contract with health insurance funds. In such cases, the activity of dispensing doctors will be maintained for three years, however, it will not be allowed to pass this authorisation on to a successor.

3. AUSTRIAN IMMUNISATION DAY

At the 22. Immunisation Day held in Salzburg on 20 April 2013, Austrian doctors and pharmacists discussed immunisation issues. The Immunisation Day is organized every year by the Austrian "Liga für Präventivmedizin" (an association of doctors, scientists and health experts dealing with health information and prevention), together with the Austrian Society for Child and Youth Medicine, the Austrian Medical Chamber and the Austrian Chamber of Pharmacists.

This year, the emphasis was on the following subjects:

- measles and rubella
- pertussis in adults
- HPV
- hepatitis
- meningococcal vaccination in adults
- flu
- travel vaccination
- flaviviruses
- directive on needle-stick injuries
- infection prevention