

Barriers and challenges of General Practice in Cyprus

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Health and demographic indicators

- 2.6 doctors/1000 people
- 375 persons/doctor
- Infant mortality rate: 4.1/1000 live births
- Life expectancy: 77 years for men, 81.4 years for women
- Total health expenditure: 6.2 % of G.D.P.

Distribution of General Practitioners (GP) at Primary Care Services

- 1998 doctors of all disciplines:
- 669 (33.5%) are women and 1328 (66.5%) are men
- 394 GP serve at the primary healthcare setting of Cyprus (32.2% work at the public sector)
- 134 are fully qualified GP (34%)
- 260 are semi-qualified GP
- Women GPs represent 56.1%

Cyprus Medical Association records 2005.

General Practice in Cyprus

- 53.7% of the total out-patient attendances at the public sector are towards GPs
- Of the total number of out-patient attendances, 39.6% are of persons of ≥ 65 years and 59.3% of women patients

General Practice in Cyprus

Most common disease categories (ICD-10) of the total out-patient attendances at public sector's medical institutions:

1. Diseases of the circulatory system (27%)
2. Endocrine, nutritional and metabolic diseases (12.9%)
3. Diseases of the respiratory system (11.6%)

Primary Healthcare Services in Cyprus

- 38 Primary Care Health Centers (PCHC)
- 6 PCHC are serving urban areas
- 7 PC clinics located in the hospital setting
- 25 PCHC are serving rural areas with another 274 health stations

General Practitioners in daily practice

- GPs practice either at PCHC (urban or rural), Out-patient Clinics and Emergency Departments of General Hospitals.
- GPs at emergency departments work on a shift basis schedule.
- GPs at some rural PCHC areas work on a 24 hour basis two or three times/ week.

General Practitioners in daily practice

- Among other tasks, GP visit schools (vaccinations, lectures), old-people's homes, institutions for people with mental disabilities and surgeries at remote villages.
- Those who work at the private sector have their own practices which are single-handed.

Barriers of General Practice in Cyprus

- No medical school in Cyprus and General Practice only recently recognized equal to other medical disciplines
- NHS provides free access to secondary care with GPs not acting as “gatekeepers”
- GPs still placed in the lowest income category among their colleagues of other disciplines

Barriers of General Practice in Cyprus

- GPs have less career opportunities
- GPs are considered as “less qualified doctors” by their colleagues of other disciplines
- Patients are still not familiar with General Practice as a medical discipline and think of GPs as “general physicians”

Challenges of General Practice in Cyprus

- A New National Health Plan recently approved by law, sets GPs the “cornerstone” for an efficient Healthcare system and introduces “gatekeepers” role with no more free access to secondary care services

Challenges of General Practice in Cyprus

The introduction of new National Health Plan will:

- give GPs a “gatekeepers” role with no more free access to secondary care and to other healthcare services
- help gain respect for the specialty in the medical community
- promote a broader, more accurate understanding of the specialty by the public
- make family medicine a more attractive career option
- develop more career opportunities with new tasks (quality assurance, medical audit)

Challenges of General Practice in Cyprus

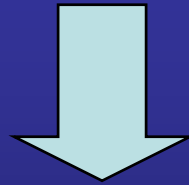
- A lot of discussion about the need for development of a medical school in Cyprus (including a department for general practice)
- An academic family medicine will:
 - ❖ give incentives to GPs for academic career,
 - ❖ build a concrete foundation of general practice
 - ❖ promote more research opportunities in General Practice

Future of General Practice

- Family physicians of tomorrow will need to have knowledge, skills and attitudes that go beyond diagnosis and treatment of disease including skills in health promotion
- The training of future family physicians must be grounded in evidence-based medicine that is relevant to the care of the whole person in a relationship and community setting

Future of General Practice

- Primary Care clinicians should receive their clinical training in patient-centred, outcomes-oriented primary care settings that include state-of-the-art information systems
- Family physicians will need to learn to work in teams and promote interdisciplinary collaboration in patient care, research and education



Special skills required in the areas of teamwork, collaboration, organisational management and leadership

Core principles of the future primary care

1. Health care must be organised to serve the needs of patients (patient-centred care)
2. The goal of primary care systems should be the delivery of the highest quality care as documented by measurable outcomes
3. Information and information systems are the backbone of the primary care process
4. Current health systems must be reconstructed
5. The health care financing system must support excellent primary care practice
6. Primary care education must be revitalised
7. The value of primary care must be improved, documented and communicated

THANK YOU