

EANA Spring Meeting 2010

28th/29th May 2010, Luxembourg

NATIONAL REPORT – AUSTRIA

AUSTRIAN HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

There are less resources for the health care system than before in Austria.

The focus is on the self-employed sector, although it is clear that – due to the high number of beds and the rather loose handling with resources - there would be a high savings capacity as well as necessity in the hospital sector.

Politicians demand high savings regulations from the social security funds, at the same time they are responsible for cost increases arising from new projects in the IT-sector, the social security funds on the other hand try to shift the responsibility on to the self-employed sector.

Ironically, social security funds refuse to sue for costs that are outside the intended scope of payments, although it is recommended by experts in constitutional law and would contribute to the financial restructuring of the social insurance funds.

ELGA

In spite of the shortage of financial resources and the fact that according to international studies the benefit might be low, there are still ambitious efforts regarding the implementation of ELGA (electronic patient record) and the “E-medication-project” will be realized in three pilot regions. The pharmacists being the primal initiator have abandoned their actual objective which would have been essential for us, namely to achieve highest possible pharmacovigilance. Their own sales – so called OTC-products should be included into the database only to little extent and not clearly identifiable, although 63% of severe interactions can be reduced to OTC-products. It can be observed – and not only in this context – that the lobbying of the pharmacists and the pharmaceutical industry regarding the distribution is getting stronger and more powerful.

ESTABLISHMENT OF “LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANIES” (DOCTORS OF MEDICINE MAY JOINTLY FORM AND OWN A PROFESSIONAL LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY)

There are a lot of stakeholders, above all the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber and the social security funds, that vehemently try to exert influence on the freedom of establishment and on the fee rebates.

MEDICINAL PRODUCTS – PROJECT IN SALZBURG

There has been a decline of the costs of medicinal products between 8,9% and 3% in the first few months, although we could observe an increase of 22% of Biologics and Oncologicals.

The percentage of Generics has gone up to 65%, with some generics, however, there can be a fall in prices which varies from month to month.

In fighting against the project the pharmaceutical industry is prepared to do whatever it takes: beginning with personal threats against initiators as far as even a broad-based promotion campaigns: (“You are not supposed to get old in Salzburg”, “A two-tier medical system is not too mediocre for the stakeholders”).

With these campaigns the industry has ruined its chances with the population, we have to admit, however, that the “h1n1-hype” has been rather helpful.

Complaints by patient representatives and colleagues are kept to a minimum. Astonishingly the resistance of the beneficiaries (the social security funds) is hidden but very hindering all the same. Inside the hospitals, even if it is still a slow process, a certain rethinking is detectable and there is an increase in generic prescription.

SWINE FLU H1N1

In Austria H1N1 flu vaccine of the pharmaceutical industry *Baxter* was used according to requirements.

Although there was a rather high number of waste material in Austria as well, it was not so much as in other countries.

Due to the exclusion of the self-employed doctors there have been long waiting periods at the too little public “vaccine-stations”. That is one of the reasons (the other one being the apparent hype) why the population didn’t show much interest in the H1N1 flu vaccination (10% vaccination rate).

Even during the usual flu season (January-March) the “visitor frequency” was at an all time low. Supposedly objective institutes like the WHO/EMEA/PKI/RKI have lost their credibility towards the medical professions.

Unfortunately there is also a side effect: the indifference regarding vaccination is increasing and spreads out across other vaccinations.

Dr. Lo/nh