

Contact
research@healthgrouper.com
+389 2 3122 100

HEALTHGROUPE RESEARCH UNIT

It is necessary to advance to role of general practitioners in Macedonia: less administration, more attention prevention and follow up of the patient's health condition (final results)

Source: www.healthgrouper.com

Skopje - (23 January 2012) – in the period between 12-19 January, the international project Healthgrouper conducted a rapid survey among the GP's in the Republic of Macedonia. Healthgrouper sent out 135 personalized email invitations to primary care doctors. More than 80% responded to the survey and answered all questions.

This survey was aimed to analyze the workload of the primary physicians, the time they spend to complete the administrative procedures. In addition the process of referring patients to higher level of healthcare was researched. This short report summarizes the main findings in line with the goals of our survey.

MAIN FINDINGS

Workload of Primary Physicians

Largest number of surveyed doctors stated that they examine **more than 20 patients** per day. Total of 68% of the primary doctors responded that they need **15 minutes on average per patient**. Less number stated that they need 20 minutes to complete an examination.

Administrative workload

Out of all surveyed doctors, 56% stated that they spend **more than 40% of the time with the patient** completing administrative procedures. Taken that average time of the examination is 15 minutes, it is estimated that **6 minutes of the time with the patient is spent** to complete the administrative procedures.

General practitioners in Macedonia

- Examine over 20 patients per day;

- More than 40% of the time with the patient, or on average 6 minutes GP spent to complete the compulsory administrative procedures;

- They refer to specialists from 1-5 or 6-10 patients per day;

- Increased amount of referrals is partially due to the need of specialist's opinion for certain prescriptions therapy;

- There is no clear system of how to schedule an appointment to specialists;

- There is no additional communication between primary physicians and specialists.

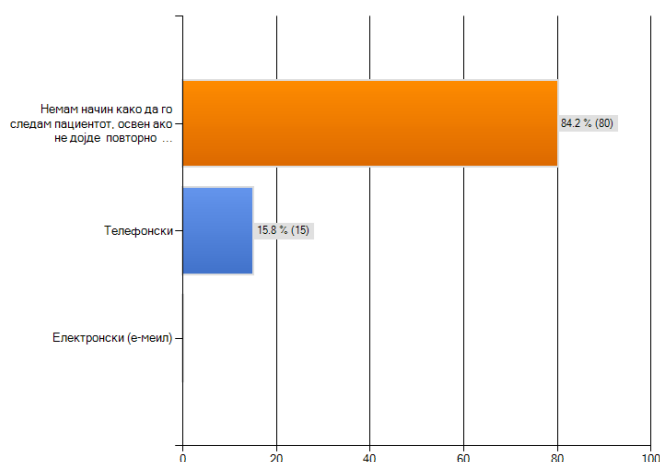
Specialist Referral

On average, 48% of the primary physicians stated that they refer from 1-5 patients to specialist healthcare per day. Additional 36% stated that they refer **6-10 patients**, while the remaining 16% stated that they refer more than 11 patients to specialist examination. There were also comments to this question given by the doctors themselves. Many doctors stated that the increased number of referrals is due to the need to have **specialist's opinion** when prescribing certain therapy.

Scheduling an appointment and communication between doctors

Separate part of the survey was dedicated to the method patients schedule specialist appointment, and the communication between the personal chosen doctor and the specialist in the context of following patient's health condition. In the part of scheduling a specialist appointment, 61% of the doctors stated that there is no system how to schedule an appointment (See figure). Additional 35% stated that the patient schedules an appointment by himself. In other words, primary physicians do not have control and insight in the process of scheduling a specialist appointment.

Како ја следите здравствената состојба на пациентот откако ќе го испратите кај специјалист?



In the part of following patient's healthcare condition after the GP refers her to a specialist, great majority of the doctors, even 82%, stated that there is no additional communication with the specialist, except through the administrative documents (health book, referrals, specialist reports, findings, etc.) Even 85% of the doctors stated that the only way to follow patient's condition is **if** the patient returns to them for examination. There is extremely low number of doctors who stated that there is direct communication between doctors by phone or some other way. The largest number of surveyed doctors thinks that internet as a means of communication, along with the additional administrative documents is the best way of communication between the doctors.

Findings and Recommendations

It is necessary to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the GP's in Macedonia. The first recommendation is to decrease the administrative workload the GP's are overburdened with. Increased administrative measures come as a result of the increasing demand to save the scarce financial resources. It is necessary to change the economic measures implemented by health authorities by introducing stimulation system to motivate primary physicians in their work.

It is necessary to introduce a system to decrease the need GP's to refer the patients to specialists only for prescription of medications.

It is necessary to introduce a system how to schedule an appointment to specialist. GP's should and need to have a leading role in providing this service for the patients. Ministry of Health and Health insurance Fund should consider the option of GP's to be able to schedule a specialist appointment for his patients.

It is necessary to improve the communication between the primary physicians and the specialists. Besides the compulsory administrative documents there should be additional form of communication introduced. Largest number of surveyed GP's stated that besides the administrative documents, internet as a means of communication available for almost all doctors could give positive results in improving the communication and following patient's health condition.

This short survey is aimed to contribute towards opening professional and public debate in the need of improving the role of the GP's in the health system of the Republic of Macedonia. The primary focus of their role should be prevention, on time diagnosis and follow up of the health status of the patient during the whole process of treatment. Only in this way we could expect to have improved healthcare results for the patients. Health system should be focused to develop and defined reforms where the expected outcome will be improved health status of the population, as monitored by clearly defined health indicators.

Survey Limitations

This short survey was conducted among 135 primary GP's for which Healthgrouper Research Unit had available and valid email addresses. Findings of this survey should be confirmed by conducting additional research.

Recommendations

- To decrease the administrative workload to the primary physicians;
- To introduce new system of scheduling specialist appointment;
- To improve the communication between primary physicians and specialists in the direction of following patient's health condition.

....

About Healthgrouper

Healthgrouper is a provider of comprehensive information for doctors and healthcare institutions in the Republic of Macedonia. Healthgrouper conducts surveys in all countries where the project is active in order to make comparative analyses for the health systems in South East Europe.

Surveys are conducted electronically and the survey questionnaires are distributed to all interested medical and dental doctors through their emails registered at www.healthgrouper.com.