



## **EUROPEAN UNION OF GENERAL PRACTITIONERS**

Alment Praktiserende Lægers Europæiske Organisation – UEMO  
European Union of General Practitioners – UEMO  
Europäische Vereinigung der Allgemeinärzte – UEMO  
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Uniao Europeia de Clinicos Gerais – UEMO  
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Europeiska Allmänläkarorganisationen – UEMO



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When talking about primary health care system the assumption is that compulsory health care is guaranteed by the Constitution on the basis of comprehensiveness, equal accessibility and solidarity. Contribution for health care of Croatian population is 7.6% of GDP. In the year 2000 primary health care expenditures were 16.25% of the total.

Development of primary health care network was poorly organized depending on economic possibilities as well as on political situation. There were variety of health institutions on the level of primary health care, from health care centers and health stations, community health centres, health care centres within companies to the medical centres which integrated primary and hospital health care. Thus primary health care gradually became oriented more towards the treatment totally neglecting prevention.

The change started in 1996 with the privatization of primary health care. The aim was to unify the services and thus simplify the whole system. Out of 2.396 general/family practitioners working in primary health care, 1.639 are working as individual contractors with the Croatian Institute for Health Insurance and are payed by head tax while 757 practitioners are working in health care centres receiving monthly salary regardless the number of patients. Most physicians, from those 1639, are working in the premises rented from health care centres. Some physicians are also working in private premises and may or may not have the contract with the Croatian Institute for Health Insurance i.e. those who can but don't have to accept compulsory health insurance. Each physician who would like to have a contract with the Croatian Institute for Health Insurance must have at least 850 patients. The maximal number of patients is 2040. The situation is going to become more simplified by decreasing the number of physicians working in health care centres. Those are mostly the physicians who lack 5 years to retirement and who were not obliged to become private owners for that reason.

Since the beginning of privatization problems with postgraduated education started. Specialization in general practice was first organized in 1961. The specialist in general

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practice was accepted as a specialist with all the characteristics. Since 1996 the insurance company is buying its services by head tax regardless the degree of the physician so that the head tax is equal for the specialist in general practice and for the physician who just finished the Medical School. There is no difference in payment for the services today. Before privatization took place expenses for specialization were covered by the Medical Centre on the basis of solidarity and physicians were selected by specific keys. Physician's substitution during the period of his specialization was arranged within the Medical Centre. Today, private physicians as individual contractors with the insurance company have to pay for their specialization themselves as well as for their substitute physician working in their practice during the time of their specialization. Financially, this is totally impossible. Therefore the number of postgraduate students is reduced to the minimum (10 students per year). Specialization in general practice is becoming the only specialization in Croatia paid by the physicians themselves while all the others are paid by the state.

Since the autumn last year we have firm guarantees by the Ministry of Health that means will be found and the problem will be solved. We are hoping that specialization will continue in the course of the next year. The number of specialists will decrease each year by natural course. There are 815 specialist in general practice today. In case that specialization would continue next year it is expected that in the year 2017 it would comprise all physicians.

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