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Key Note

Financial crisis and primary care in Greece: now more than ever

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Pavlos N. Theodorakis, MD, MSc, DipLSHTM, PhD, is a General Practitioner with a PhD in the evaluation of the quality of primary health care services. He studied Health Policy, Planning and Financing at the London School of Economics, where he also worked as a research associate. He also worked as a clinical and research fellow at the Medical School of the University of Linköping in Sweden in the evaluation of primary health care services in the Balkans. He further worked in primary care projects in Abkhazia-Georgia, and Pogradec-Albania during the Kosovo war. After closing down the first psychiatric asylum in Greece as a CEO in 2006, he is involved in several reform initiatives in primary health care and mental health sectors in Greece. He is currently the WHO National Counterpart for Greece in mental health issues and the President of the National Primary Health Care Committee, working close with EU Task Force for Greece and international experts for the implementation of the primary care sector reforms in Greece. He has more than 50 publications, including book chapters and articles in peer-review journals in the fields of health policy, public health and epidemiology. He is an Adjunct Professor at the Open University of Cyprus in Health Policy and has lectured at graduate and postgraduate level at the Universities of Ioannina, Crete and Athens Greece, as well as Linköping, Sweden.

Abstract

During the Greek economic crisis, there is a global concern owing to its side effects and risks involved for both the Eurozone and the global economic community. Major sources of inadequacy are the severe structural weaknesses in Greek public administration, economy and society, which lead to bureaucracy, corruption, low quality of services and also high costs. For 30 years, Greece attempts to reform the healthcare system with a focus on PHC. The extent to which primary care ensures universal and equitable access to high quality PHC services and continuity of care is still questioned. Furthermore, Greece has the world's highest number of MRI/ CT scans performed every 100,000 population, even above the USA, as well as in the use of antibiotics (first place among the 27 EU countries) and the highest number in Caesarean sections. Greece is also the world's third country to oversupply of physicians (after Cuba and Belarus) and has more dentists and more pharmacies per 1.000 inhabitants in Europe. We are the only country in the Eurozone that has no mechanisms for measuring cost, quality and productivity of hospitals and health services. We are the only country in the EU that has no organised national screening programs for breast cancer and cervical cancer. We are first or in the top three worldwide in much more negative indicators than the limited space of this abstract allows me to present. Going back to our routes, to the Hippocratic, holistic, primary health care approach is the only way forward. A well-structured primary care system, is now more than ever, the only way forward.

Keywords:

economic crisis, Greece, primary care, reform

Presentation available at: <http://www.euprimarycare.nl/istanbul/conference-programme-efpc-2013-istanbul-results>