

5th EUROPEAN HEALTH FORUM GASTEIN –

On the Future of Health in Europe
25 to 28 September 2002

**Special Interest Session:
Funding health care:
Current options and
future directions
25 September 2002**



International Forum Gastein

Tauernplatz 1

A-5630 Bad Hofgastein

Tel: +43-6432-26169;

Fax: +43-6432-20014

press@ehfg.org

www.ehfg.org

Media Spokesperson Dr. Carmen Kiefer

carmen.kiefer@utonet.at

Tel +43-676- 344 9971

Taxes to ensure Health Care

Speakers and Participants in the Discussion:

Josep Figueras, European Observatory on Health Care

Anna Dixon, European Observatory on Health Care

Tim Baxter, Department of Health London

Bernhard Merkel, Head of Unit in the Public Health Directorate of the European Commission in Luxembourg

Martin McKee, European Observatory on Health Care

How can health care be financed? Is private health care a considerable alternative to current health care systems in the EU, which are partly hard to finance? These were the hard-core issues discussed during the Special Interest Session “Funding healthcare: current options and future directions” within the scope of the European Health Forum Gastein.

As main methods of financing, taxes (for instance higher taxes on tobacco), social security contributions, out of pocket payments and voluntary health insurances (VHI), were taken into consideration. The experts agreed, that these methods only show an effect, if they are applied in combination with each other. Despite the problem of financing health care, health care systems face additional new demands, like the demand for medical coverage of the whole population or suitable state-control of the systems.

Promoting the private sector of health care was rejected with the argument, that this would create too severe social differences and was not suitable to establish health care for everybody. Martin McKee of the European Observatory on Health Care stressed that he strongly believes in the functioning of state-controlled health care

systems due to the high degree of solidarity within the European population. People were willing to support with their contributions basic medical supply for other people within a social health care system. McKee pointed out that such a system would not work in the US, for instance, because parts of the white population were not willing to pay for health care for Afro-Americans.

In general, the participants in this workshop argued for public health care carried by taxes. Josep Figueras of the European Observatory on Health Care said, that it is essential not to forget historical and social values in this discussion.