



## **Insufficient Handling of Long-Term Diseases in the EU**

- **Increasing costs of chronic disease threaten health services**
- **Considerable variations in treatment between countries demonstrate inefficiencies**

Statistics highlighting the impact of long-term disease on European health services were presented at the European Health Forum Gastein 2006, the EU's leading conference on health policy. The figures clearly indicate the inadequacy in how the problem of chronic disease is handled.

“The increasing burden from long-term medical conditions threatens to overwhelm European health services unless innovative management systems are put into place,” said MEP Miroslav Mikolašik. “Member States and the EU Commission need to take this particularly seriously. There are huge variations in hospital admission rates for long-term conditions”. Austrians are admitted to hospitals with osteoarthritis seven times more often than the Portuguese (e.g. Osteoarthritis: Portugal 73/100,000 compared to Austria 544/100,000). Laszlo Gulácsi of Hungary commented, saying “I refuse to believe this difference could be put down to genetics alone”.

### **Hospitalization due to osteoarthritis / 100 000 hospitalizations OECD Health Data (2004)**

Portugal	73
Spain	118
Italy	146
Ireland	147
UK	156
Denmark	198
Sweden	210
Belgium	242
France	256
Finland	448
Austria	544

The use of health services across Europe is not uniform and there are large variations depending on the socio-economic group, ethnicity, and gender. “Men can be considered a hard-to-reach group concerning health literacy.” commented Prof. Banks, president of the European Men's Health Forum. “Men's poor use of primary care services is a significant factor in hospital admission rates and mortality. Men will be admitted as a hospital emergency almost twice as often as women over the age of 50.” he added.

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