

Raising Funds for The National Healthcare System: Portuguese Physician's Perspective

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Background: Since 1976 the Portuguese National Health Service (NHS) is mostly financed by public budget.

Financial resources directed towards health care have reached a very high level. In fact, approximately 10% of GDP is devoted to health expenditure, which puts Portugal among the countries with the highest level of health spending within Europe. Urgent intervention is needed, not only to better manage the few resources available, as well as to find other funding sources. The financial crisis turns the need to contain public spending a priority, making urgent the definition of funding strategies for the national health systems sustainability.

Objective: In this study we collected the physician's perspective about the most viable funding sources for the NHS and about the best way to finance the hospital services where they are working.

Methods: We questioned about 100 physicians, working mainly in public hospitals in Lisbon, about: 1- the measures that should be implemented to control the "slippage" in the health budget; 2- the most viable funding sources for the NHS; and 3- the best way to finance their own hospital service.

Questionnaires were statistically treated.

Results: The 5 more frequent answers to our questionnaire are next presented:

Physicians think that the measures to control the "slippage" of the health budget are: 1- exam request control; 2- criminal penalties to those responsible of the overruns; 3- software with a complete database of patients; 4- hospital fusion for service concentration; 5- monthly monitorization of expenses.

In their opinion, the most viable sources for financing NHS are: 1- DRG (Diagnostic Related Groups) reevaluation; 2- general taxation according to population income; 3- funding by services goals achievement; 4- support private health insurance acquisition; 5- increase medical services sales to private units.

The best identified sources for funding each service were: 1- maximization of the means and resources return on investment; 2- partnership development with the private sector; 3- increase the number of protocols for clinical essays; 4- increase medical services sales to private units; 5 - fund raising campaigns.

Conclusions: The improvement of the financial situation of Portuguese NHS can be achieved with different measures that will allow cost containment, additional resources management, improvement of the efficiency and effectiveness of the existing public health services and definition of strategies to raise funds for public hospitals. Only the practice of these measures simultaneously will allow the sustainability of the Portuguese NHS. Physician's suggestions to overcome the need of funding are of great importance and should not be ignored.

Measures to control slippages of the Health Budget

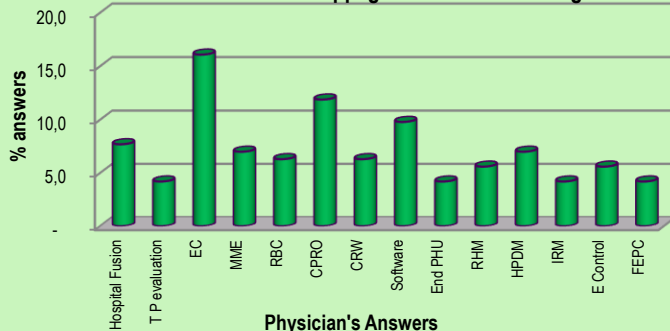
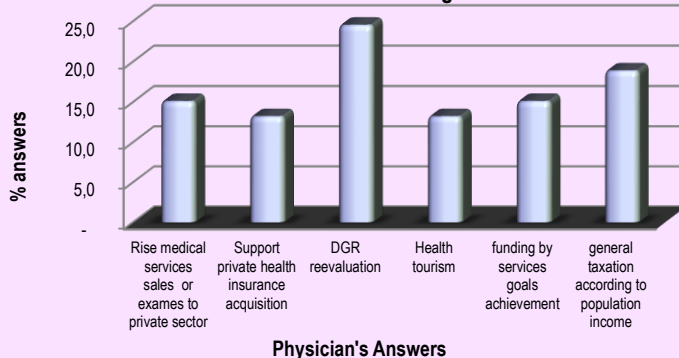


Fig.1) Question1 – "In your opinion ,what measures should be implemented to control Health Budget's slippages?"
Legend: TPE (Therapeutic Protocols Frequent Evaluation); EC (Exam Request Control); MME (Expenses Monthly Control); RBC (Realistic Health Budget Construct); CPPO (Criminal Penalties for Overruns); CRW (Control and Waste Reduction); PHU (Public Healthcare Units With Private Management); RHM (Reliable Hospital Management); HPDM (Involve All Health Care Professional in Decision Making); IRM (Improve Resource Management); E Control (Expenses Control); FEPC (Focus on Efficient Primary Care).

Viable sources for financing NHS



Physician's Answers

Fig.2) Question 2 – "What are the most viable sources to NHS funding?"

Best sources to hospital services funding

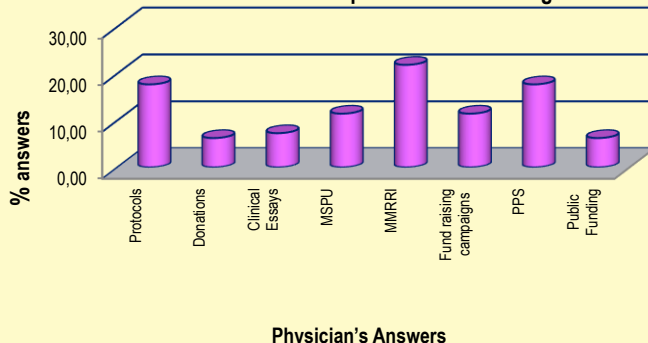


Fig.3) Question3 – "What do you think are the best sources of funding your hospital services?"
Legend: Protocols (Increase the number of protocols for clinical essays); MSPU (Increase medical services sales to private units); MMRR (Maximization of the means and resources return on investment); PPS (Partnership development with the private sector)

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