

Convention on Health Analysis and Management

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The economic sustainability of healthcare systems

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1. The economic sustainability of healthcare systems – balance between three factors: the debt generated, the income earned and the equity permitted

The healthcare system represents 8.9% of GDP in the OECD countries. 75% of this budget is covered by public expenditure, and healthcare expenses have been increasing more rapidly than GDP for approximately twenty years.

The healthcare system generates costs, but it also creates revenue by increasing life expectancy, improving health, etc. The benefits are not limited to the health sphere, as countries with healthy populations also tend to have more efficient economic systems.

The healthcare system must also be considered in light of the level of equity in access to care depending on geographical location and socio-professional category.

Overall, the economic sustainability of a healthcare system is evaluated using these three factors: the debt it generates, the revenue it earns, the health and economic benefits it produces and the level of equity it provides.

2. A health system, rather than a healthcare system: revisiting the notion of productivity

The management of the healthcare system should not be limited to the cost of treatment. Management is complex, as between comparable countries, the ratio of expenses incurred to quality of care can vary between 1 and 5. The notion of productivity must not only consider cost optimization, but must also involve the health and societal benefits of the broader system of which the healthcare structure is a part.

3. Economic sustainability is possible, but all signs point to an increase in costs

From a strictly economic point of view, sustainability is possible. Many countries comparable to France, such as Germany or the Netherlands, have healthcare systems that are balanced or profitable in the long term. But the healthcare system is not a direct economic system, in the sense that the user is not the payer. In our societies, all signs point to an increase in costs: the aging population, raising expectations and patients' lack of awareness of the true costs.