

Medicines in Portugal Workshop Series: Access and Reimbursement

15 October 2009



Overview

This workshop was hosted at the Hotel Fenix in Lisbon on the Thursday, 15 October and Friday, 16 October, 2009. The goal of the workshop was to discuss how medicines reimbursement relates to access and medicines information relates to rational use of medicines in Portugal.

Portugal's reimbursement system: A critical assessment of access to medicines

Dr. Sabine Vogler of the Austrian Health Institute was commissioned to analyse the reimbursement-related barriers to access essential medicines in Portugal. Her analysis was published by HAI Europe in a national case study on *Access to Essential Medicines in Portugal*, available in English and Portuguese.

Thirteen participants attended, representing the national medicines authority (INFARMED), research centres (CEFAR), health professional associations (Associação Nacional das Farmácias), students organisations (European Medical Students' Association), and consumer and patient groups.

List of Participants

Claudia Montenegro	Ines Teixeira	Silvia Rocha
Cristina Cabrita	Isaura Vieira	Sofia Ribeiro
Daniela Fonseca	Mario Beja Santos	Sonia Caldeira
Elsa Matos	Raquel Correia	Suzete Costa
Eugenia Saraiva	Raul Almeida	

Key Presentation

At the workshop, Dr. Vogler was the key speaker and her presentation gave an overview of the reimbursement system in Portugal, the criteria developed for analysing reimbursement systems and the analysis of the Portuguese system.

The structure and function of the Portuguese reimbursement system was outlined and the Portuguese health and pharmaceutical expenditure (public and private) was compared with that of other European countries. In the discussion, questions were raised about the reimbursement of medicines for rare diseases. The group found the European comparison to be of particular interest. The students reported that the structure and function description is not covered in their coursework, and so, was especially useful for them.

Participants then brainstormed about criteria used to analyse a reimbursement system, followed by a description of those criteria used by Dr. Vogler and her team.

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Participants were invited to critically analyse the reimbursement system in groups. Their analysis focused on identifying the factors that prevent people from accessing the essential medicines they are prescribed and using medicines rationally. The group work was a useful exercise to facilitate dialogue between stakeholders that have traditionally had limited interaction, for example, the Ministry of Health and consumers representatives. Several policy issues were raised and possible solutions were suggested.

Advocacy on medicines issues: How to carry the message forward

In the afternoon, Teresa Alves (HAI Europe Coordinator) and Katrina Perehudoff (HAI Europe Projects Officer) facilitated a session on advocacy that sought to lay the groundwork for the beginnings of a medicines advocacy network in Portugal.

Four representatives attended from stakeholder groups of patients, consumers, general health forum and health professionals (pharmacists).

List of Participants

Claudia Montenegro

Cristina Cabrita

Mario Beja Santos

Raul Almeida

Key Presentation

The workshop introduced the levels of action (i.e. advocacy, distribution/access) on medicines issues, relevant examples of each, and the importance of advocacy. The question was posed: *Do you want to work together on one policy issue identified in the reimbursement workshop?* From here, we broke into a focus group discussion that raised the following points:

Coalition building Which actors should be included in a common advocacy approach in Portugal? The group suggested that doctors, pharmacists, nurses, other healthcare professionals, industry, consumers, patients, trade unions, hospitals, and insurers among others, could be invited to collaborate on an advocacy initiative. The group considered the impacts of including or excluding certain stakeholders.

Trust building There is a need to bring actors together in an inclusive and participatory environment in order to discuss their respective interests and potential shared goals. It was agreed that external actors with clear commonalities, such as HAI, could be more successful at bringing stakeholders together and collaborating.

Establishing goals and action points Potential short and long terms goals were discussed and general agreement was reached that:

- A short term goal would be to improve health literacy on the rational use of medicines
- A long term goal would be to expand the accessibility of medicines and equity through advocacy. It was noted that more work is needed before larger policy issues can be tackled, in terms of enhancing the cohesion between stakeholders and advancing the legitimacy of civil society organisations in policy making fora.

Action points Identify key stakeholders and extend an invitation to a round table discussion, ideally by an external body, to discuss the goals, issues and concrete actions of a medicines advocacy network in Portugal. The sustainability of such a network is challenged as the groups present did not express interest and/or ability to carry the action points forward.

The full summary of evaluations from participants and the speaker can be found in Annex 1.



ANNEX 1 – PARTICIPANTS’ AND SPEAKERS’ EVALUATION



Written evaluation (participants)

Content – new and important information: **strongly agree 2; agree 7; disagree 1**

Speakers – knowledgeable and effective communicators: **strongly agree 2; agree 8**

Structure – sufficient time for topics and useful interaction: **strongly agree 1; agree 6; disagree 3**

Overall – workshop was useful: **strongly agree 1; agree 9**

Overall – **expectations exceeded 2; expectations were met 6**

Content evaluation (speaker)

Content was informative to group with mixed levels of knowledge

European comparisons were of particular interest to group

Structure evaluation (speaker)

facilitated a direct exchange between policy makers (INFARMED) and civil society by hosting a question panel

in place of a focus group discussion, hold more presentations in the afternoon with time for question and answer periods

combine all workshop components into one day without the option to attend only the morning or afternoon session

Target audience evaluation (speaker)

Representatives from different stakeholder groups were present (positive point)

consult target audience on date, time and location of workshop, not only the speakers

target more medical and pharmacy students

Logistics evaluation (speaker)

use groups active on the ground to promote the workshop

use a conference room that is an appropriate size (not too big)

indicate that the registration and/or workshop starts at 9 am on workshop materials and reminders to ensure participants arrive on time (by 10 am)

event pack, documents and presentations were very good

the venue, menu and IT services were all very good