



Evaluating health systems in order to improve the quality of treatment

Measuring the differences in patient health, before and after an operation or treatment, in a reliable and objective way is the connecting theme within the European Commission's aims. These differences must guide public health actions promoted by Euphoric (European Public Health Outcome Research and Indicators Collection), a European project coordinated by the Istituto Superiore di Sanità, launched in 2004 and concluded in 2008.

In keeping with the spirit of the European action programme for public health, the Euphoric project gives useful information to health workers and decision makers in order to measure the quality of health performances in Europe and to build a platform to access best practices for European citizens. In what way? By developing a common language, collecting a series of tools and experimenting new methodologies that are useful in measuring the efficiency and quality of health institutions: in particular, a list of 54 indicators regarding specific single areas of disease and an algorithm developed for the cardiovascular field which, once validated, will allow hospitals to *benchmark*.

For a self-evaluating health system

The project fits into a previously known stream of studies, *outcome research*, which analyzes the outcome of treatments and operations. Outcome indicators permit the measurement of the effects that treatments and health procedures have on the population's health or on a single patient. For this reason, they are an indispensable tool for the evaluation of the effectiveness of medical care offered to the public. The death rate after 30 days from the event of a myocardial infarction or after 30 days from a fractured neck of the femur or the revision rate of an orthopaedic prosthetic implant are good examples of outcome indicators selected by the Euphoric project.

The platform developed by Euphoric allows national health services and individual hospitals to evaluate the effectiveness of their own performance. In fact, outcome indicators permit comparison between different health institutions and the measurement of the quality of treatment and procedures, thereby shedding light on weak points and promoting improvement in performance.

By doing so, the methodologies formulated by Euphoric provide valid instruments for decision makers to formulate choices on the planning and use of available resources, but also give citizens the possibility to really make conscious choices.

A starting point

The indicators list and the benchmarking function selected by the Euphoric project are not a definitive endpoint, but the starting point of a path to constantly improve the quality of health care assistance offered to European citizens. It is the link for other research projects in this sector, with the awareness of the need to continually monitor results and to constantly update procedures, methodologies, and public health requirements.

Starting in fact from the results obtained through the Euphoric [cardiovascular pilot study](#), the European project Eurhobop (European Hospital Benchmarking by Outcomes in acute coronary

syndrome Processes) is a good example for such a link. This new project was launched in 2009 with the objective to provide European hospitals with valid tools to both assess and benchmark their performance in the general management of patients with acute coronary symptoms to guarantee and improve the quality of health care offered to European citizens.

The Euphoric project

The Euphoric project, co-funded by the European Union, was a network that included 15 institutions from 10 different European countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Slovak Republic, Spain, Sweden) and Israel.

Website: www.euphoric-project.eu.