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ЕВРОПЕЙСКА АСОЦИАЦИЯ НА СТАРШИТЕ БОЛНИЧНИ ЛЕКАРИ**

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Author :	Dr Hrvoje Šobat
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Current status of health reform:

In the beginning of August 2006, the so called “package” of health system related laws has been passed in Croatian Parliament (some have been amended and some have been passed for the first time); Health Care Act as fundamental law on principles, measures and organization of health care in Croatia, Obligatory Insurance Act, Voluntary Insurance Act and Professional Illness and Injury at Work Insurance Act. Main goal of these legislative novelties is to lessen the debts of health system. There has also been a change in the list of medicines which are provided by the obligatory health insurance; actually there will be two lists of medicines – so called list “A” (which is paid by the obligatory insurance and consists of 50-60% of cheaper generic drugs) and list “B” (patients who prefer original drugs from this list will have to pay for it). The Croatian Medical Chamber will be consulted to give its opinion on the list of medicines.

Current situation in hospitals:

As a result of long negotiations of almost all syndicates representing workers in public sector (which, naturally, applies to doctors as well), supplement on salary amounting 6% will be added yearly to all workers in public sector, beginning with January each year, until 2009 (total increase of almost 20 % in three consecutive years).

As stated in last year’s report, there is still urgent need for accreditation of hospitals. In this process, a group of Canadian experts were given the mandate by the World Bank to provide organizational support in establishing the system of accreditation of hospitals.

Concerning the working time, according to the amendments to the above stated Health Care Act working time is limited to 48 hours weekly (including on-call duty) but these amendments will come into force in 2011.

Shortage of doctors

Although the number of unemployed physicians registered at the Croatian’s Employment Service has significantly fallen, recent studies of number of physicians show a major shortage – especially in number of specialists. General numbers show that in 5 years (from 2002 to 2005.) the number of physicians registered at the Croatian’s Employment Service dropped from 675 in July 2002. to 250 in June 2005. At present moment (December 2006) this number is 468.

For example, in four specialties (internal medicine, general surgery, gynaecology and obstetrics and paediatrics) there is a shortage of 925 (as minimum required by the Book of Rules on Minimum Requirements) in university and general hospitals. The other aspect of this problem

is the average age of specialists; for example the average age of specialist in internal medicine is around 49 years; the reason for this fact is in decreased interest for studying medicine.

The Croatian Medical Chamber has considered removing the age limit for the renewal of working license. According to the regulations of the Chamber, the license is issued for the period of professional life until the age of 70 but may be prolonged to the age of 75 subject to a satisfactory health assessment.

EU requirements

Croatia has given an official consent to the European Commission to accept all regulations concerning the system of specialist training; all UEMS documents as well as Directive 2005/36/EZ have been carefully taken into consideration and compared to regulations in Croatia. Minister of Health has appointed a Committee whose activities are: to adopt a list of independent specialities in Croatia as defined in the Directive 2005/36/EZ (which would enable automatic recognition in the EU); forming of national boards for each of specialities consisting of representatives of medical schools in Croatia, Croatian Medical Chamber and Croatian Medical Association. These boards should make a plan and program of specialist training as well as other conditions, all based on a unique model. Further, Croatian Medical Chamber will, within its authorities, suggest a national model of recognition of all acquired licensed specialities because the recognition of present status is one of basic principles of EU.

prim.dr. Hrvoje Šobat,
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