

EuroDRG: Executive summary

Despite the fact that diagnosis-related groups (DRGs) have been adopted in an increasingly large number of countries around the world, knowledge about the effects of DRG systems and DRG-based hospital payment systems, as well as about optimal design features of these systems, remains surprisingly limited. International experiences with DRG systems and DRG-based hospital payment systems can inform countries when developing and optimizing their national systems. In addition, in a context of growing patient mobility facilitated by the European Union (EU) Directive on the Application of Patients' Rights in Cross-Border Healthcare, an increasingly important issue relates to whether there is scope for harmonization of DRG systems within Europe.

The EuroDRG project aimed to achieve a strategic impact in four dimensions: (1) advancement of the state of the art, (2) enhancement of cooperation between researchers in Europe and other geographic regions to promote integration and excellence of European research in the field, (3) development of the scientific evidence base that supports the Member States to better organize their health systems, and (4) transfer of research results into practice to empower policy and decision makers to better manage and reform health care systems. The project was organised in three Phases and has scrutinized both, the design features of DRG systems in Europe as well as the performance of these systems across different countries. In addition, it had a strong focus on ensuring the transfer of knowledge from research into practice by providing recommendations for policy makers within Europe and beyond who are working on improving their national DRG-based hospital payment systems or designing successful policies for the slowly emerging pan-European hospital market.

The project has been extremely successful at achieving its objectives. The project has given rise to an impressive number of presentations and publications. EuroDRG consortium members have participated in numerous conferences (ECHE, EHMA, IHEA, PCSI) and policy dialogues (European Health Summit, World Bank, Commonwealth Fund) to discuss the projects findings. In addition, during the project's final conference, a lot of interest was received from countries where DRG systems are currently in the early stages of development, in particular in Bulgaria, China, Russia, Serbia and South Korea (all represented at and involved in the Final Conference). For 2012, a workshop and a thematic session have been selected for the European Conference on Health Economics and the EuroDRG project represents one of four themes at the Nordic Case-Mix Conference in June 2012.

The work of the EuroDRG project has resulted in one highly visible book on DRGs in Europe. A number of publications have appeared in a wide array of peer reviewed journals (*Value in Health; Health Economics, Policy and Law; Langenbeck's Archives of Surgery*). In 2012, amongst others, a special issue in *Health Economics* containing 11 articles about the results of the quantitative analyses of the EuroDRG project is being published. Nine articles about DRG classifications for selected episodes of care as well as empirical work on the cost-quality relationship have been (or are about to be) submitted to medical journals, and will hopefully appear within 2012. In addition, a commissioned overview is being written for the *BMJ* and one article highlighting the implications of the project's findings for the United States is about to be submitted to *Health Affairs*. Ultimately, the projects' findings contribute to better national DRG systems in Europe and beyond, and they lay the foundations for future coordination and, possibly, harmonization of DRG systems in Europe.