

Policy Making Support by Sharing of Information and Experiences among the PPRI Network

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Abstract

Policy Making Support by Sharing of Information and Experiences among the PPRI Network

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Problem statement: There has been growing need and interest in networking on pharmaceutical pricing and reimbursement (P+R) by policy makers. Representatives of European public authorities have asked for both systematic information collection as well as quick answers to ad-hoc queries.

Objectives: To establish and maintain an active and sustainable network for sharing information, best practice, and expertise in pharmaceutical P+R policies; to develop and refine tools and mechanisms to survey, analyse, compare, and benchmark updated pharmaceutical P+R information.

Design: Networking initiative complemented by technical work—from 2005 to 2007 in the framework of an EU-funded project and from 2008 on as a member states-driven action.

Setting and study population: Network of 38, mostly European, countries; institutions—national competent authorities for pharmaceutical pricing and reimbursement, European and international institutions (i.e., WHO, European Commission services, OECD, World Bank).

Interventions: In total 11 PPRI meetings, with presentations and discussions of policy experience in the host countries, interactive sessions for feedback on documents and needs assessment.

Outcome measure(s): Two evaluation surveys in the course of the EU project covering project-relevant indicators such as use of glossary, relevance of reporting template, and meeting information needs.

Results: Since its start in 2005, PPRI has produced a range of deliverables, which provide country-specific and cross-country information and have served as basis for decision making on pharmaceutical policies. These include 23 published country reports (PPRI Pharma Profiles), a comparative analysis of P+R information of 27 countries, glossary of key P+R terms, a list of P+R indicators, and around 40–50 ad-hoc queries of pharmaceutical prices and policy experiences per year. The information in the profiles has helped countries in the redesign and implementation of national legislation and policy measures. The ad-hoc queries have supported countries in resolving specific P+R issues at national level.

Conclusions: PPRI has proven to be a growing and active network as well as a sustainable action that has continued after the end of the EU project as a voluntary initiative borne by the network members. The initiative has met needs on information on other countries. Moreover PPRI, which is based on common understanding and trust among its members, offers a platform for open dialogue about the benefits and limitations of policy options as well as for information sharing of experiences in the practical implementation of measures. Network members have regularly expressed a need for the continuation of the initiative. Besides informal information sharing, further and more in-depth analyses are required.

Funding source(s): Austrian Federal Ministry of Health, European Commission, Health and Consumer Directorate-General.

Background

Over the last couple of years there has been growing need and interest in networking on pharmaceutical pricing and reimbursement by policy makers in European countries. Representatives of public authorities have asked for both systematic information collection as well as quick answers to ad-hoc queries. A decade ago, a person responsible for pricing in one European Union (EU) Member State often did not know the colleagues in the other countries. Reports on pharmaceutical policies were either not available or when existing did not meet the needs, and there was no systematic gathering of information on pharmaceutical policies in Europe, apart from commercial sources. Some initial efforts for extending this information exchange fell short due to lack of funds and continuity.

Objectives

- To establish and maintain an active and sustainable network of competent authorities for pharmaceutical pricing and reimbursement;
- To share information, best practice, and expertise in pharmaceutical pricing and reimbursement policies;
- To develop and refine tools and mechanisms to survey, analyse, compare, and benchmark updated pharmaceutical pricing and reimbursement information;
- To work on the development and promotion of a common understanding and language on pharmaceutical issues.

The PPRI story

Pharmaceutical Pricing and Reimbursement Information (PPRI) is a networking and information-sharing initiative on burning issues of pharmaceutical policies from a public health perspective. It involves a network of more than 60 institutions (mainly relevant authorities and third party payers) from 38, mainly European, countries. This on-going networking exercise results from the PPRI research project, co-funded by the European Commission, Directorate-General Public Health and Consumers, which was carried out from 2005 to 2007. In the course of the project the PPRI network was established, and a set of pharmaceutical indicators, filled with real data from 27 PPRI countries, as well as more than 20 country reports and brief overviews on the pharmaceutical systems (country information) were produced. Information on these deliverables was made available at the PPRI website: <http://ppri.goeg.at>.

The PPRI story/continued

After the official end of the project, the PPRI network members asked and agreed on the continuation of the project, and as a result, PPRI continues on a voluntary basis. PPRI today is a Member States' driven initiative in which the networking of the competent authorities continues, via regular networking meetings and continuous sharing of relevant information for decision-making, including an up-date of country-specific information. The PPRI secretariat is hosted at the WHO Collaborating Centre for Pharmaceutical Pricing and Reimbursement Policies.

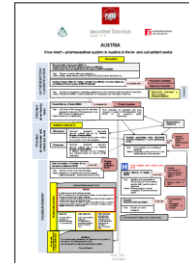
PPRI network

The PPRI network consists of more than 60 institutions from all 27 European Union Member States plus more than eleven further, mainly European, countries (Albania, Croatia, Canada, Iceland, Macedonia, Norway, Switzerland, Serbia, South Africa, South Korea and Turkey). The majority of the participating institutions are national authorities, mainly Ministries of Health, Medicines Agencies and Social Insurance institutions. European and international institutions and organizations (WHO Europe and Headquarters, European Commission services, OECD, and World Bank) and representatives of related initiatives (e.g. Medicine Evaluation Committee of the European Social Insurance Partners) and projects (e.g. "Tool box" project of the Andalusian School of Public Health) are part of the network.



PPRI Pharma Profiles – country specific reports

PPRI has been producing country reports on pharmaceutical pricing and reimbursement systems. These profiles were to be written by the PPRI network members who are national officials and experts with Ministries of Health and Social Insurance Institutions directly involved in the decision-making and administrative process of pharmaceutical pricing and/or reimbursement in their country. One important experience for all was the review process: while the authors, being experts on their country, argued for the importance of specific details, the reviewers followed a broader comparative health system analysis approach, which led to high quality, common understanding and broad acceptance of the reports. In total, we published 23 PPRI Pharma Profiles, and the information was incorporated in a comparative analysis about pharmaceutical pricing and reimbursement on 27 European countries (PPRI Report). As policy makers wrote the profiles, they counted with the political approval from the Ministries at high level and therefore they are now seen and accepted as the official document on pharmaceutical policies in that country. Within its "sister project" PHIS (Pharmaceutical Health Information System, <http://phis.goeg.at>) further updated county profiles (on the management of medicines in the in-patient sector as well as the pharmaceutical system in the in-patient and out-patient sectors) were produced. All published Profiles are accessible at <http://whocc.goeg.at>.

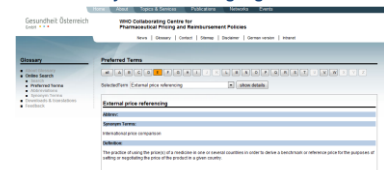


PPRI information-sharing and dissemination

Internal sharing by network meetings: at one network meeting per year, hosted by a volunteering PPRI network member institution. Internal sharing by PPRI network queries: since 2007 more than 140 such queries have been circulated, addressing requests for prices and reimbursement status of a product but also topics regarding distribution, medicines promotion or medicines use for patient safety. Dissemination by websites, publication, presentations. PPRI Conference: Two PPRI Conferences were held in Vienna for disseminating results (2007 and 2011).



PPRI Glossary: common language



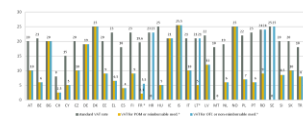
Very early in the development of the template for the Pharma Profiles, misunderstandings and differences in the interpretation of technical and policy terms became evident among the PPRI network members. This was mainly attributable to language and to the fact that network members had their

country specific concept in mind; they did not take into account that some characteristics needed to be "translated" in more general terms. Furthermore, some technical terms are quite confusing, e.g. the concepts around the term "referencing" (external price referencing, internal price referencing, reference price system).

Therefore, the PPRI project produced a glossary of terms on pharmaceutical policies. The PPRI Glossary is based on existing glossaries and was developed in cooperation with WHO and OECD. In a follow-up, the PPRI Glossary was further developed based on a critical review and enlargement by hospital relevant terms.

PPRI Indicators

A set of indicators was developed for surveying, comparing and analyzing pharmaceutical systems and policies. The set of PPRI indicators was further refined and now covers, in an integrative approach, both the out-patient and in-patient sectors. In a follow-up initiative, a database on these indicators was developed.



PPRI "burning issues"

Topics which PPRI has been dealing with and/or has on its agenda:

- Global financial crisis
- External price referencing (international price benchmarking)
- Pharmaceutical distribution
- High-cost medicines
- Generics promotion

Membership eligibility

Membership in the PPRI network is available for public institutions with a national competence for pharmaceutical pricing and/or reimbursement. Eligible members include Medicines Agencies, Ministries of Health (in some cases also Ministries of Social Policies, Ministries of Economics), Social Health Insurance institutions, and National Health Service executives. Though evolved from a European initiative, eligible members from other regions are most welcome.

Conclusions

PPRI is an active and sustainable network and has continued and grown after the end of the EU project as a voluntary initiative borne by the network members. PPRI is based on common understanding and trust among its members, and offers a platform for open dialogue of benefits and limitations of policy options. Besides informal information sharing, further, more in-depth analyses are discussed. The PPRI secretariat has stimulated the ad-hoc exchange of information on urgent pharmaceutical policy issues.

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