

Volume 13, 06 November 2013

Publisher: Igitur publishing

URL: <http://www.ijic.org>

Cite this as: Int J Integr Care 2013; EFPC Conf Suppl; [URN:NBN:NL:UI:10-1-114870](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:nl:ui:10-1-114870)

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Conference Abstract

Consequences of the economic crisis on health: does it help to have a strong primary care system?

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Abstract

Purpose: The aim of this study is to test hypotheses on the moderating effect of a strong primary care system on the relationship between the current economic crisis and health outcomes.

Theory: The economic crisis that hits European countries currently, is hypothesised to affect the health of European citizens. Especially those who are direct victims of the crisis by having lost their job and those having limited financial means are in a vulnerable position. It has been argued that strong primary care could attenuate the consequences of the current crisis. We will examine this supposed effect of primary care by testing the following hypotheses:

- In countries that are more severely affected by the current economic crisis, self-rated health is worse and people are more limited in daily activities.
- The stronger the primary care system of a country is, the less self-rated health and daily activities of its inhabitants are affected by the economic crisis.
- The moderating effect of strong primary care is strongest for the dimension access to primary care.
- The moderating effect of strong primary care is best visible for individuals who are themselves unemployed and those who have limited financial means.

Methods: Data on the strength of primary care in 2009/10 were derived from the 31 country study PHAMEU. Information on the economic situation of the countries was derived from Eurostat statistics over the period 2002-2010. Data on self-rated health and limitations in daily activities and individual background characteristics were derived from five rounds of the European Social Survey, collected in 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008 and 2010 among 31 European countries (the 27 EU member states and Croatia, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey). Data were analysed using a three-level multilevel model with strength of primary care measured at country level, the economic situation measured at year of survey and health outcomes and individual determinants measured at individual level (European Social Survey; n= 50,000 per survey).

Findings: Data are available and are currently being analysed. Results will be presented at the conference.

Discussion: Results will be discussed in the light of current evidence on the benefits of strong primary care and the possible consequences for socio-economic and health policy in Europe.

Keywords:

economic crisis, primary care, access to care, self-rated health

Presentation available at: <http://www.euprimarycare.nl/istanbul/conference-programme-efpc-2013-istanbul-results>