



ICARE4EU

Innovating care for people with multiple chronic conditions in Europe

The ICARE4EU project wants to improve the care for people suffering from multiple chronic conditions. An estimated 50 million people in Europe suffer from such conditions. The complex health care problems of these patients and their need for continuous and multidisciplinary care poses a great challenge to health systems and social services. But also from a patient perspective, improvements in for instance the organization of care and the level of their own involvement in the care process are important.

ICARE4EU will describe and analyse innovative approaches in multidisciplinary care for people with multiple chronic conditions currently existing in Europe. By disseminating knowledge about effective and innovative solutions, we hope to contribute to an improved design, a wider applicability and more effective implementation of patient-centred multidisciplinary care for people with multimorbidity.

The ICARE4EU project is financially supported by the Health Programme 2008-2013 of the European Commission.

What are we going to do?

Expert organizations will be approached in 30 European countries. These organizations will provide information about the characteristics of care programmes aimed at patients with multimorbidity that have been initiated in their country. This will include information about for instance the target group of the programmes, the disciplines involved, the care pathway or procedures, the way patients and informal carers are actively involved, and their evidence or results. More detailed information will be gathered about the following subjects: patient-centeredness, use of e-health technology, management practices & professional competencies and financing systems. Additionally, country level information about the health care system and its characteristics will be gathered. Best practices will be identified for each of the four afore mentioned subjects. Based on this information key characteristics for successful management and implementation strategies will be identified. A plan for future monitoring of the developments in multimorbidity chronic illness care will also be developed.

By disseminating this knowledge to the European Commission, ministries of health as well as stakeholders in the field we hope to stimulate the exchange of knowledge on implementing innovative multimorbidity care between stakeholders and policy-makers in Europe. In this way, the ICARE4EU project will provide knowledge about effective, efficient and sustainable approaches to manage the health and social needs of people with multiple chronic conditions in Europe.

The duration of the project is 2013 to 2016.

Why is this important?

Chronic illness and multimorbidity in particular, highly impacts on individuals' quality of life, but also on societies and care systems. Innovation of chronic illness care in Europe is urgently needed for two reasons. First, most current care delivery models are disease-specific and therefore not adapted to the needs of the growing number of people with multiple health problems. For people with multimorbidity, single-disease programmes incorporate the threat of a too narrow focus, limited merely to the disease for which the programme has been designed for, a lack of evidence regarding treatment for the combination of health problems, inadequate coordination and subsequently also a lack of support for health care providers in deciding on the best treatment. The latter is caused by the likelihood of contradiction in single-disease-specific clinical practice guidelines as they do not (sufficiently) address aspects of multimorbidity. Second, chronic illness care puts a high burden on financial and human resources. Increasing healthcare expenditures and the pressure on healthcare labour markets raise concern about its sustainability.

Patient-centred multidisciplinary care integrating health and social care, building strong partnerships with community services and using new technologies to support self-management and informal care has the potential to meet the various needs of people with multiple chronic conditions, while making efficient use of resources. New integrated care programmes for (older) people with multiple chronic conditions are now being developed and implemented. Since an actual overview of European integrated care programmes addressing multimorbidity is not available yet, an overview of programmes and initiatives, analysing their characteristics, strengths and weaknesses, and ensuring regular updates, is an important first step to enhance the quality and sustainability of multimorbidity chronic illness care in Europe.

Where will the project be executed?

All EU Member States as well as Croatia, Iceland and Norway will be invited to participate in the project.

For whom will the outcomes of this project be interesting?

The results of ICARE4EU will help policy makers and stakeholders to plan, decide and advocate integrated care for people with multiple chronic conditions. The results contribute to an improved design, wider applicability and effective implementation of integrated care innovations and support the objectives of the second Health Programme and the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing (EIP on AHA). The results will create an opportunity for incorporating regular updates and monitoring in the existing HiT (health systems reviews) production by National Lead Institutes supported by the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, which will enable all European countries to profit from its outcomes.

Direct target groups of this project are organizations involved in the design and delivery of chronic illness care in European countries. These include policy-makers (at national/regional and EU level) and care providers working in primary and secondary healthcare, but also professionals working in social care, local community services, educational organizations, companies planning e-health solutions, and certainly also organizations of chronically ill people, older people and informal carers.

The ultimate target group are, of course, European citizens with multiple chronic conditions who will profit from the results by more optimal and tailored care meeting their specific needs.