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What's Happening for Healthcare in the European Institutions

Commission Concerned About Insufficient Cancer Screening

With an ageing population, figures on cancer deaths are due to increase, unless preventive measures are taken. The European Union (EU) shares a common commitment to ensuring proper screening for breast, cervical and colorectal cancer, as set out in Council Recommendation of 2 December 2003 on cancer screening (2003/878/EC).

In the first implementation report, the Commission highlights that although much progress has been made in cancer screening, Member States have not fully put this screening in place. Less than half of the minimum recommended numbers of screenings take place in the EU each year. By providing a clear description of the situation, this report helps to renew the commitment to put in place breast, cervical and colorectal cancer screening as a crucial and cost-effective measure to reduce the burden of cancer in the EU.

Report Findings

- For breast cancer, only 22 Member States are running or establishing population-based screening programmes;
- For cervical cancer, only 15 Member States are running or establishing population-based screening programmes, and
- For colorectal cancer, only 12 Member States are running or establishing population-based screening programmes.

The current annual volume of screening examinations in the EU is considerable; however, this volume is less than one-half of the minimum annual number of exams that would be expected if the screening tests specified in the Council Recommendation on cancer screening were available to all EU citizens of appropriate age (approximately 125 million examinations per year). Less than half of these examinations (41%) are performed in population-based programmes, which provide the organisational framework for implementing comprehensive quality assurance as required by the Council Recommendation.

How do We Increase the Volume of Screening in the EU?

- Member States should continue to improve or implement population-based cancer screening programmes, supported by collaboration between Member States and professional, organisational and scientific bodies and experts.
- Additional efforts must be made to improve and maintain high-quality screening measures to assure the quality, effectiveness and cost-effectiveness.

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