

## Volume 1 / Issue 2 Summer 2006 - Country Focus:Italy

### Facts & Figures: the Italian Healthcare System

#### Healthcare System & Administration

Italy has a national health plan (Servizio Sanitario Nazionale), which provides universal coverage for hospital and medical benefits, however about 30% of the population has contracted additional private health insurance. The Italian public healthcare system is decentralised and is based on three levels: the State, region and local health boards. The State is responsible for issuing general system guidelines, establishing work contracts, handling international relations and financing research hospitals. The 20 regions of Italy control the functioning of the health services within their areas of jurisdiction and finance independent hospitals. Finally, the local healthcare units provide daily management of services and finance public and private hospitals under contract with the regions. The remaining private hospitals are financed by their patients.

#### Healthcare Facilities, Services & Staff

Throughout Italy, there is a coexistence of public hospitals, private nonprofit hospitals and private for-profit hospitals. While most private hospitals are under contract with the regions, public hospitals may also engage in private activities as they are, for the most part, independent hospitals.

A gatekeeper physician is responsible for providing citizens with access to secondary healthcare. Patients may choose their own physician, however each physician has a cap on the number of patients he or she is allowed to cover (1,800 patients for a general practitioner and 800 patients for a pediatrician).

#### Italy at a Glance

Population:	57.3 million
Live birth:	9.3%
Death rate:	9.7%
Life expectancy:	76 years for men / 84 years for women
GDP:	1,300 billion euros
GDP per capita:	22,700 euros
Total healthcare expenditure:	8.9% of GDP
Healthcare expenditure per capita:	1,800 PPP euros
Inpatient care expenditure per capita:	730 euros
% of healthcare system financed by public funds:	75%
Number of equipment & scanners per million population:	8.6 MRI 3.8 radiology equipment 21.9 scanners
Number of hospitals:	1,357 hospitals, including 1,144 acute care hospitals
Number of beds:	226,700 acute care beds (public beds 77%, private beds 23% of all beds)
Number of beds per 1,000 population:	4.0%
Rate of occupancy:	76%
Length of stay:	6.9 days
Number of acute care hospital admissions:	157 admissions % population
Waiting list:	Significant

#### The Role of IT

IT has played a significant role in the Italian healthcare system. Some of the most promising opportunities in the Italian healthcare IT sector are in telemedicine and communication (Internet) services. Because of the disparity between the regional healthcare networks, telemedicine is seen to hold particular promise for use in providing consultations amongst doctors and between doctors and their patients from region to region.

Already, the Lazio and Lombardia regions have established successful teleconsulting and telecardiological service programmes to provide home care as well as linking different medical facilities that have different technologies and treatments available.

In 2005 a national electronic healthcare card was launched to approximately 15 million Italian citizens and residents. A key component of the Italian healthcare program, the card, is used to monitor and manage each phase of the public health expenditure cycle and contains medical as well as European health insurance information.

More information on the Italian healthcare system is available on the website of the Servizio Sanitario Nazionale ( [www.ministerosalute.it](http://www.ministerosalute.it) ).

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