

Survey of German Physicians Reveals Concerns with Government Intrusion in Health Care Decisions

A survey of physicians in Germany who treat complex conditions like cancer, HIV, rheumatoid arthritis and diabetes, highlights the unintended consequences of centralized government decision-making in health care. Findings from this survey demonstrate why the U.S. government should not import other countries' health care policies. Four topics were considered in the survey: patient access to treatments, government influence in the practice of medicine, physicians' flexibility and autonomy, and investment in research and development.

Germany's statutory health insurance often prioritizes managing costs over providing patients with access to the best possible health care and treatment options.

Patient Access to Innovative Medicines

More restrictive access to innovative treatments in Germany leaves some patients with fewer options and risk of poorer health outcomes. For example, between 2010 and 2014, the five-year survival rate for pediatric brain cancer was 8.7 percentage points lower in Germany than the United States.¹

85%

of German physicians agree their patients would benefit from access to more innovative medicines.

56%

More than half of German physicians say the government focuses too much on cost control, at the expense of patient access.

52%

More than half of German physicians have had more than one patient travel abroad to gain access to a treatment or receive medical services.

"I have a patient who might benefit from [an innovative migraine treatment], but it is not clear whether I can prescribe it. I am currently treating him with samples... he can work again with the treatment I am giving him, and he has just been promoted. He is doing well. If I have to take it away from him again, we are back to square one." -Germany Immunologist

Physician Flexibility and Autonomy

Germany's health care financing and delivery system – especially use of regional guidelines on physician behavior – can limit physician prescribing flexibility and patient access to the most innovative treatments.



77%: More than three quarters of German physicians say guidelines and regulations sometimes, often, or always prevent them from providing the best treatment.



75%: Three quarters of physicians have been unable to prescribe the treatment they thought was the best clinical option within the last year.

"I would say that the benefit in the US is the faster availability, because of the lack of bureaucratic hurdles... That the doctor has much more freedom to decide, without having to fear the federal institutions." -Germany Rheumatologist

The Influence of Government in the Practice of Medicine

With Germany's legal framework, the government has wide-ranging power to regulate health care and supervise the federal committee that determines medical benefits.

89%

of German physicians say the government has equal or greater influence over health care decisions compared to providers and patients.

0%

of German physicians say health care decisions are completely directed by providers and patients.

53%

More than half of German physicians say that their government rations health care to control spending.

“We want to have less monitoring and regulation. Less bureaucracy and less influence from [the government] ... when one has less possibilities then the efficacy of the care is worse.” -German Hematologist

Research and Development (R&D)

Germany physicians say the United States leads in R&D and agree their country must increase investment in research to remain globally competitive.



3 out of 4 German physicians say their country trails the United States in biomedical R&D.

83%

of German physicians believe their government should increase investment in medicine R&D.

“The largest medical innovations are usually started in the U.S. The FDA approves medicines usually earlier than the EU does.” -German Rheumatologist

Survey Methodology: Health Strategies Insights by EVERSANA conducted a 20-minute online survey with 100 German physicians, fielded 11/11-12/03/2019, and 30-minute telephone interviews with 6 German physicians between 9/19-9/20/2019. Survey targeted clinical specialists (hematologists, oncologists, immunologists, neurologists, rheumatologists, and endocrinologists) with at least 5 years of clinical practice in Germany, who treat a minimum number of patients per month based on their specialty, are affiliated with an academic institution or are involved in clinical trials as part of their practice, are up-to-date on the latest advances in their specialty, and are knowledgeable about the German process for assessing cost effectiveness, pricing and reimbursement process for new drugs.

Sources:

1. 69.5% in Germany vs. 78.2% in U.S.; C Allemani, et al. “Global surveillance of trends in cancer survival 2000-14 (CONCORD-3): analysis of individual records for 37 513 025 patients diagnosed with one of 18 cancers from 322 population-based registries in 71 countries,” The Lancet, 2018. 391(10125): 1023-1075.