

THE ROLE OF INFORMATION IN HEALTH SERVICES IN ENSURING THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROGRESS OF A COUNTRY

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Abstract

Information is knowledge, the basis for the development and evolution of society and is essential in any field of activity, ensuring its progress. In healthcare, information is indispensable to healthcare professionals and patients and is the fundamental element in both researching and accessing these services. Research means learning, knowledge, and evolution. It is no coincidence that the most developed countries of the world attach great importance to research, as it is considered to be a first step in the evolution of technology and thus of humanity, and in the current period, the human dependence on technology is known, regardless of the field in which activates. In the context of globalization and the ongoing evolution of health technology, possession of information is essential, both by healthcare professionals for research and the ability to work with high-performance devices, as well as by patients, in order to access programs offered by to the system. Unfortunately, not all people have access to information sources additional to those provided by healthcare professionals, and in this respect, the living environment is an important element in terms of the level of information held, how to access it, and how the information is provided in that environment. This article aims to inform the reader about the importance of having qualitative information as a basis for society's progress, as well as the need for information in research and access to health-related services that are indispensable to life.

Keywords: information, economy, health, development, access

JEL classification: A10, A12, I15, O10

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1. INTRODUCTION

Information is an element of major importance in any field of activity, representing a fundamental and inexhaustible resource that underpins the development of society. In health services, information is an essential element both in researching and accessing, enhancing knowledge and broadening the horizon of perspectives and expectations. In the context of modern society, the evolution of technology, as well as correctly selected information, lead to saving time and reducing costs in improving health.

Health care is one of the most important services offered to the population, so research and implicitly information resources are indispensable for the proper functioning of this system. Healthcare research is a field of research that has developed over the past decades in the need to provide quality and safety populations on this segment, as well as new methods of preventing and treating diseases, given the increasing number of requests for this type of service. Thus, medical attributions are applied in different areas and, in correlation with other disciplines, result: health management, medical sociology, the performance of medical technologies, medical information systems, health services economy.

In order to ensure the economic and social progress of a country, it is essential to invest in research health services for a healthy population and workforce. In this sense, information resources are one of the main factors, the information being an important resource for organizations and individuals, which, although shared, is not exhausted.

2. THE IMPORTANCE OF INVESTMENT IN HEALTH SERVICES RESEARCH

When we talk about health, we talk about health services - all the actions done for the benefit of the individual and of the society in general, meant to protect, promote and maintain the health of the community, actions achievable through all the political-legislative measures, programs and strategies addressed institutions empowered to provide these services. (Mooney, G., 2003, p. 89).

Institutions in the field of healthcare are intended, through continuous research, through the organization, working methods, technology, and endowments in line with the requirements of the European norms, to pursue a

permanent evolution in providing health insurance to the society. Health research, being an interdisciplinary domain, is impossible without a wide range of information. In the contemporary period, the evolution of technology facilitates the transmission of information as well as its preservation, allows progress in providing quality medical services even in areas not adequately served by this sector and access to adequate healthcare at a reasonable cost. (Tan, J., 2011, p. 2).

In order to facilitate access to information, safe and fast transmission and preservation in our country as well as in most countries of the world, electronic information was introduced in the health services system. The goal of introducing e-services in this field is to improve quality while reducing costs and is a good thing for patients, healthcare professionals, and institutions. In this regard, Topacan et al. (2008) identified 37 criteria for the benefits of adopting eHealth, including cost, time factor, content, language, data security, personalization of services, quality, availability of communication. (Topacan, U., et al., 2008, pp. 2453- 2461). As an economic impact, this has proven to be a positive one, showing a decrease in costs and improvements such as shortening the time for completed forms, confidentiality of information, access and rapid transmission of patient data.

In health services, research has global effects and targets social determinants, policies, economic, and the implementation and consequences of health policies. Thus, in a context characterized by continuous and wide-ranging changes, such as the considerable aging of the population, the accelerated development of information technology, the deterioration of the quality of resources and the rapid progress of medical sciences, the role of research in this field requires complex approaches. Our country has competent institutions to coordinate, carry out and centralize health research activities, institutions aligned with EU initiatives and criteria.

- National Institute for Research and Development in Health, Bucharest;
- National Institute of Infectious Diseases Prof. Dr. "Matei Bals", Bucharest;
- MedFuture, from the "Iuliu Hațieganu" University of Medicine and Pharmacy in Cluj-Napoca, inaugurated in the spring of 2016;
- CEMEX: Advanced Center for Research and Development in Experimental Medicine at the "Grigore T. Popa" University of

Medicine and Pharmacy Iasi, the first experimental research center in Romania, inaugurated in June 2016;

- Clinical and Laboratory Medical Research Center of the Colentina Clinic Hospital, Bucharest;
- National Institute for Research and Development in Biomedical Pathology and Biomedical Sciences "Victor Babeș", Bucharest;
- Research Center for Clinical and Experimental Medicine at the University of Medicine and Pharmacy of Craiova;
- The Center of Bio-Medical Engineering of the Polytechnic University of Bucharest;
- Research Centers at the "Carol Davila" University of Medicine and Pharmacy Bucharest;
- Oncological Institute Prof. Dr. "Alexandru Trestioreanu", Bucharest.

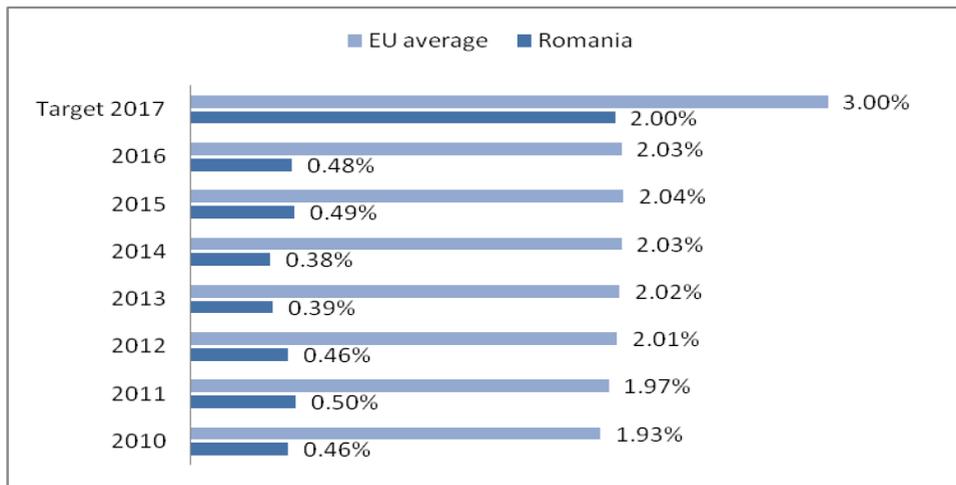
Research on health services needs to be considered as a priority and a cost-effective investment. Developed economies allocate important resources to finance this sector as a prerequisite for sustainable long-term economic development, taking into account that health means workforce and hence the prosperity of the personal and national economic situation. Becker (1964) advocated the importance of associating the concept of human capital with that of health, aspects that lead to the enhancement of workers' quality and productivity. Thus, countries that have seen a continuity in revenue growth have also had large increases in health investment. (Gary, S., B., 1964, p. 24). Thus, research into health services needs to be supported financially, as this leads to healthy economic growth through the workforce.

Figure 1: The importance of health research for the economy



Source: made by author

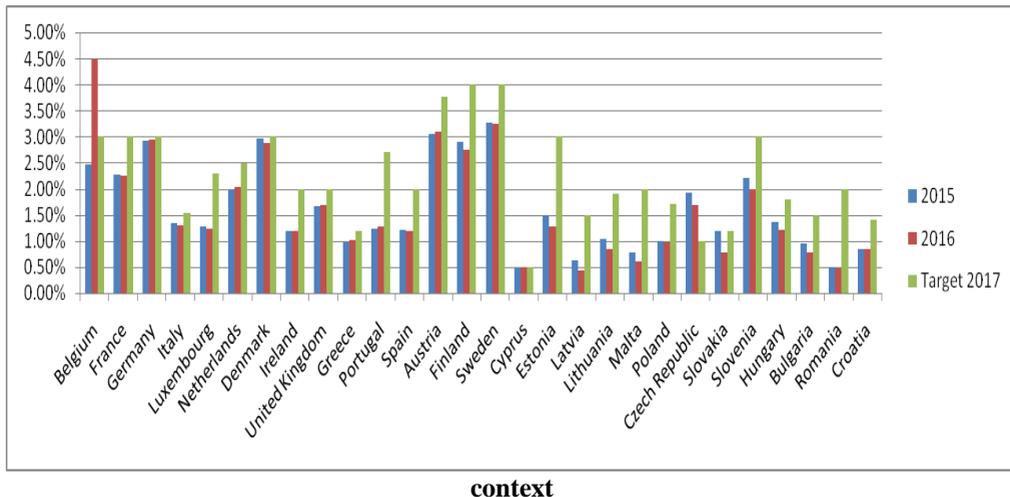
Figure 2: Percentage of GDP allocated for research, Romania compared to EU average



Source: author, based on available data at http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=t2020_20&plugin=1

Our country is well behind the European Union average for the percentage of GDP allocated for research, but this percentage has not exceeded the 0.5% threshold since 2012, compared to the EU average of more than 2% allocated to this sector. For the year 2016, our country has allocated only 0.48 of GDP for research, 1.55 percentage points less than the EU average, and for Romania, by 2017 it was 2%, one percentage point less than the EU average, which does not It was fulfilled.

Figure 3: Percentage of GDP allocated for research, Romania in the European



Source: author, based on available data at

http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=t20_20_20&plugin=1

Compared with the rest of the EU Member States, Romania is among the last places on the percentage of GDP allocated to research. Thus, in 2015, our country was in the penultimate place, with a percentage of 0.49%, the last being Cyprus, which allocated only 0.48% of the research. In 2016, Romania ranked the penultimate place in the ranking, with 0.48%, the last being Latvia, which allocated 0.44% of GDP to research. For the year 2017, our country had a 2.0% benchmark, which gave it a better position in the funding of research funding but was not respected.

Concerning spending on research and development in health, in 2015, Romania allocated 14.1% of the percentage of 0.49%, and in 2016 is allocated 6.5% of 0.48%, which means a very small amount in comparison with the average existing at European level and the poor state of health in our country. It is also a much lower percentage compared to the previous year, given that the percentage of employees working in the research and development system in medical and health sciences increased by 0.6 percent in 2016 compared to 2015, so that in 2016 the percentage of employees working in this sector was

11.0% compared to 10.4% in 2015. Also, the number of research projects in the medical sciences increased by four projects in 2016 to 450, compared to 446 existing projects in 2015.

3. THE IMPORTANCE OF INFORMATION IN ACCESSING HEALTH SERVICES

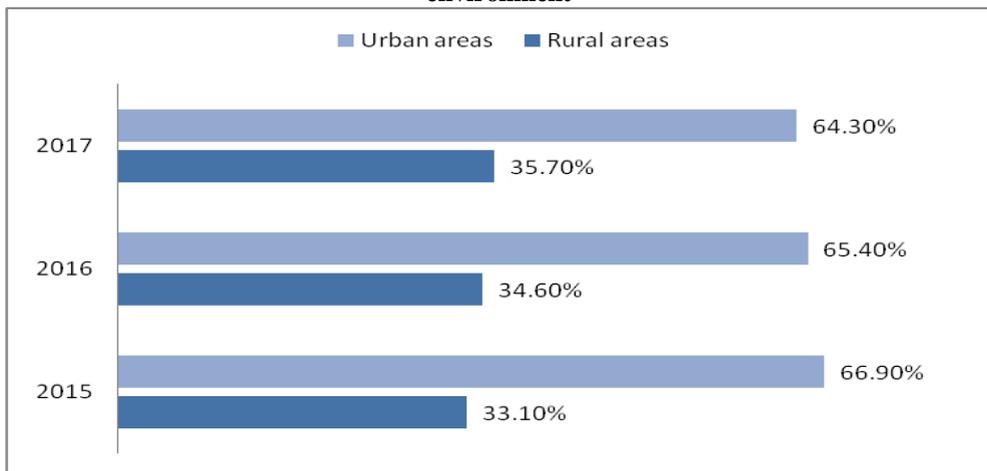
Accessing health services signifies the interest for self and others, as well as the possession of information. It is important for citizens to be informed about the availability of public health services and social programs so that they can benefit from the help of society in accessing investigations in this area. The society has the obligation to provide information both in urban and rural areas on government programs related to this segment and to provide clarification to those interested in certain aspects of these services that are essential to life. (Dewar, D., M., 2010, p. 75).

In the context of globalization and the ongoing evolution of health technology, hospitals often come to patients with high-performance devices and high-quality equipment, but at the same time, healthcare professionals are overwhelmed to provide information. Thus, most of the time, information on some unintelligible issues is searched by the patient in external sources of the hospital environment, such as the internet, newspapers, books. Unfortunately, not all people have access to sources of information additional to those provided by healthcare professionals, and in this respect, the living environment is an important element in terms of the level of information held, the way of access, and the means by which information is provided in that area. Thus, it is known that in rural areas, access to information is lower than in urban areas. In the villages of our country, besides having a good internet connection and the ability to use modern technology, time does not allow people to access sources of information delivery. In this area, time is divided between television and household chores, and many people do not have the ability to use and learn to use modern technology. But in the urban area, access to technology and information is easier, and people are more receptive. Also, in this respect, the service also has an important role because, in most cases, its nature requires the use of technology.

In this respect, especially in developing countries, which are experiencing difficulties in the quality of health care in disadvantaged and rural areas, the state faces high costs in providing information on health

services. With the rapid development of information and communications technologies, health institutions benefit from the Internet to serve the healthcare service, but at the moment, the problems of connection and access of the population are one of the obstacles to the spread of electronic health information. (Tan, J., 2011, p. 8).

Figure 4: Structure of households connected to the Internet, by residence environment



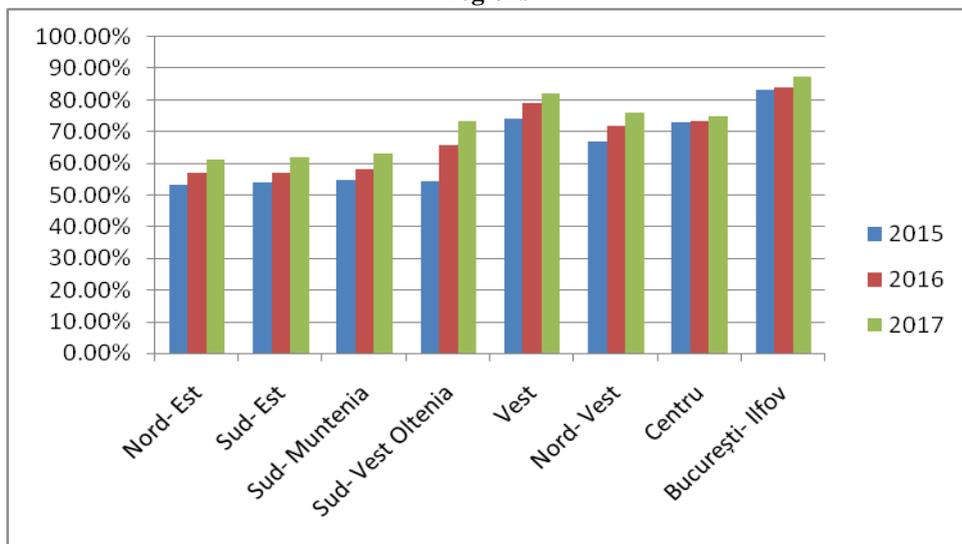
Source: author, based on available data at
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http://www.insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/com_presa/com_pdf/tic_r2016.pdf
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Taking these into account, it can be said that urban people are more informed and more accessible to health services compared to those in rural areas. Also, as far as urban residents are concerned, they are informed before accessing a particular medical service, often opt for specialized doctors and for a second opinion. Physicians and retirees, in particular, opt for the medical unit to which they were directed by the family doctor and the closest medical laboratory.

Apart from these, we meet a multitude of people who do not carry out their set of laboratory medical tests offered free of charge by providing health

standards. This is often due to lack of information. It is also to be borne in mind that in most villages in our country the family doctor is missing, which means an aggravation of the situation regarding travel to the elderly and the additional costs for the investigation of the state of health. Access to information is often a determining factor in accessing medical services because, with information, people know exactly where to go, the necessary documents to get free, and the possibility of appointments without the need actually move to the health facility.

Figure 5: Structure of households connected to the Internet, by development regions

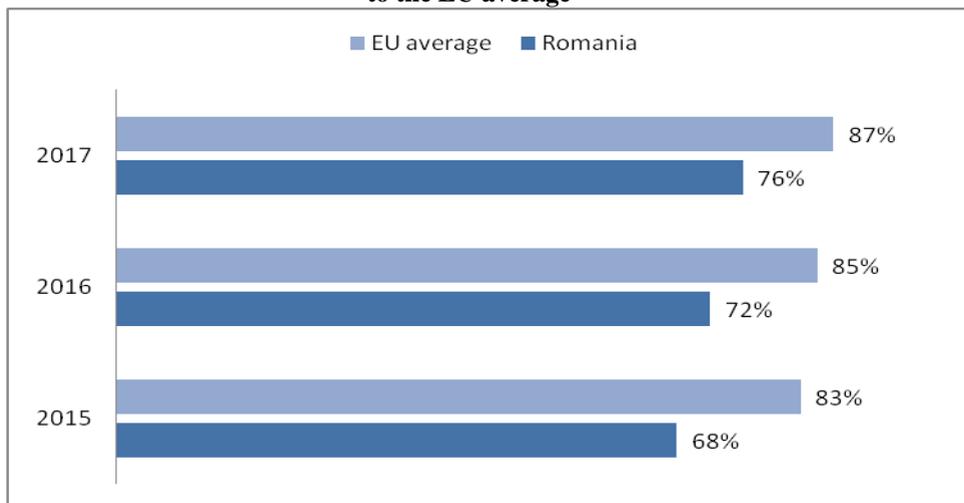


Source: author, based on available data at
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http://www.insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/com_presa/com_pdf/tic_r2017.pdf

The disparities between the regions of our country, in terms of access to information, are many cases, the lack of financial resources as well as the different concerns of the rural population compared to the urban environment.

The problem facing contemporary society is related both to access to information and abundance, as well as to the ability to locate, select and assimilate the truth of the presented. According to Carl Shapiro and Hal Varian, "wealth of information causes attention deficit", urging us to filter materials because although the current technology infrastructure makes information easy to access, careful sorting is required. (Shapiro, C., Varian, H., R., 1999, pp. 6- 7).

Figure 6: Structure of households connected to the Internet, Romania compared to the EU average



Source: author, based on available data at
http://www.insse.ro/cms/files/statistici/comunicate/com_anuale/tic/a15/tic_r2015.pdf
http://www.insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/com_presa/com_pdf/tic_r2016.pdf
http://www.insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/com_presa/com_pdf/tic_r2017.pdf

Romania is behind the EU average on an Internet connection, but the percentage of households connected to the internet is growing year on year, which is a positive aspect. Thus, from 2015 to 2017, this process has grown by 8%, and from year to year, the percentage of households connecting to the Internet is about 4%.

4. INFORMATION - AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN PREVENTION AT THE EXPENSE OF TREATMENT

It is known that in most EU member states there is dissatisfaction with the ways of funding and providing health services. The main common problems, which occupy different places in the order of national concerns, are the existing equity deficiencies in accessing this system, the efficient and transparent use of existing resources, control over expenditures and the quality of the services provided. (Druker, P., 1993, pp. 325- 326).

The most developed countries of the world focus on prevention because it is less expensive than treating diseases. It is known that health has always been a major concern for humanity. Developing and diversifying the ways in which the diseases are prevented and treated, with emphasis on the quality and cost of services in this field, have evolved in accordance with the principles and the economy.

Health care has a different interpretation for each one, but the same importance, so for some people it means decent living, healthy eating, stress avoidance, periodical medical investigations, routine medical tests. Thus, taking into account health care, most people think that regular medical investigations could prevent various illnesses. In this respect, however, with regard to the world's high disease index, we can deduce that there are quite a few people going to the doctor regularly to prevent, not just for treatment. (Menou, M., J., 1993, pp. 116- 117).

The majority of people perform a set of medical analyzes only when they consider the family doctor without requesting on their own initiative to benefit from the free of charge offered by the company. Also, most people go to the family environment and so to a medical analysis lab do when they feel bad. Of course, people who neglect to periodically perform a set of medical analyzes are influenced by various factors, such as lack of information, especially in rural areas, where people go to the family doctor only when they feel bad, another factor is the lack of money and the difficulty of traveling, encountered in the elderly.

An important aspect in this regard is the information because it is necessary for people to be informed about what is meant by the medical analysis they perform and not to allow the analysis of the analyzes to be made by the doctors alone without even being curious to know what that

investigation means. (Jones, S.; Groom, F., M., 2012, p. 136). This is more common in rural areas, where people choose to visit a family doctor only when they have symptoms of a condition, and the doctor recommends the set of analyzes and then indicates outcome medication. Conforming the patient to follow the physician's instructions without asking for and without receiving information and clarification about his or her own health and the significance of medical analysis remain the most common problems in the rural areas.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Information has always been at the heart of society's development and is the essence of human evolution. An important step in this respect is the awareness of the importance of having qualitative information not just quantitative, it is essential to select the information from the abundance of what we are offered by various sources.

In the contemporary period, it is important to inform us to usefully use the benefits that society offers, especially in health services. Electronic information has been an important step in this direction, but it is necessary to be aware of the importance of investing in research in this sector in order to provide society with a healthy, working-class population leading to prosperity.

Information in health services responds to the needs of the population and offers the opportunity to know the benefits the company offers, to save time and financial resources in the prevention or treatment of various diseases. Taking into account the high level of the global disease index, research in this field and the carefully sorted information is beneficial in the prevention of a wide range of conditions. Information helps to know about a healthy lifestyle, harmful food, and free medical services.

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