INFACT
Joint Action on Health Information

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FACT SHEET PRIORITISING HEALTH INFORMATION AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

InfAct WP5: "Status of health information systems in European Union Member States and regions"

Key outputs

1. Duly prioritised health information is essential to ensure that health information system (HIS) indicators support public health policy action (agenda-keeping) and highlight emerging public health issues (agenda-setting).

2. Within WP5 of InfAct, Task 5.3 compiles and reviews national priority setting strategies, creating an overview of health information prioritisation across EU Member States and associated countries.

3. A two-round Delphi Survey was developed, pre-tested and conducted among representatives from EU and associated countries. Good-practice-approaches to health information development and prioritisation at national level will be identified from the experts' responses and a guidance document will be developed based on the survey findings.

4. Through uptake of this guidance in systematic establishment of national HIS, we hope to facilitate a systematic process for information prioritisation. This guidance may also inform health information prioritisation at European level for establishment of a European health information system (EU-HIS).

Background and Rationale

Health information includes data on population health, health determinants, health care systems, and health-relevant policy developments. Health information informs decision-makers, researchers and the public; it is a cornerstone of the public health action cycle[1]. Health information guides public health interventions (agenda-keeping) and points to emerging public health issues (agenda-setting). In order to fulfil these functions, health information needs to be duly prioritised, ensuring that relevant public health issues are identified and that public health interventions respond to real needs.

Interestingly, however, little can be found in the literature on health information prioritisation methods and procedures in Europe, including the selection of indicators. InfAct Task 5.3 aims to close this gap with a Delphi survey that, firstly, gathers information on national methods for health information prioritisation across the EU and associated countries. Secondly, from the information gathered in the first round, survey participants are asked to identify good-practice-approaches. The findings will be synthesised into a guidance document for prioritisation of health information for national health reporting. This guidance at the national level is a first step towards development of standards for prioritisation of health information within an EU-HIS.

Proposal

We employed an online two-round Policy Delphi survey which was distributed to EU and associated countries' representatives – mainly public health and health information experts – participating in the Joint Action InfAct.

The results of a literature review formed the basis of the Delphi survey. The 1st round contained mainly open-ended questions and was used to generate qualitative information on national health information prioritisation strategies. Full-text reponses from the 1st round were developed into closed questions for the 2nd round, focusing on prioritisation approaches, criteria and stakeholder involvement. Participants were asked to rank these questions according to the degree of "desirability", "feasibility", "importance" and "confidence", based on their expert opinion.

A total of 119 experts in 33 countries were contacted; we received 19 fully and 11 partially completed questionnaires for the 1st round of the Delphi survey. Experts from 13 countries agreed to be invited to the 2nd round; of these, six completed the 2nd survey. At the time of this writing, the analysis of both rounds is being finalised. From the results, a guidance document will be drafted, to be presented to the InfAct partners with a view to adopting a consented final version.

Recommendations for sustainability

The expected outcome of the Delphi survey is a list of good-practice-approaches to health information development and a guidance for prioritisation at national level. The document will include criteria, methods and structured prioritisation processes as well as stakeholder involvement. We also aim to draw insights into the inclusion of good-practice-approaches in the prioritisation of health information in the respective countries, as well as analyse the connection between health information and health targets, both national and international.

A guidance for prioritisation of health information for national health reporting enhances comparability of health information systems across the EU and associated countries. The guidance could be further developed into a health information prioritisation strategy at the European level for establishment of an EU-HIS.

The results will be submitted for publication in an international journal in order to affect the working practices of those developing national HIS.

References

[1] Rosenbrock R (1995) Public Health als Soziale Innovation. Das Gesundheitswesen 57(3):140-144

[2] World Health Organization (2014) Health in all policies: Helsinki statement. Framework for country action. WHO, Geneva

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