

Short Report on the Current Situation of Primary Care Paediatricians in Germany

- Primary Care Paediatrics (PCP) is well established in the German health system. Our organization (BVKJ) has a good reputation and is always consulted when it comes to hearings (e.g. parliamentary h.) concerning the well-being or problems of children. We have a very efficient network of paediatric press speakers. Paediatric and child issues are constantly in the media.
- Every year 600 paediatric trainees pass their final exams and the same number of paediatricians go into retirement. Nevertheless, comprehensive PCP will not be possible in the future because 80 to 90 % of all trainees in paediatrics (and in GP-/family medicine) are women. Their life-work balance will be reduced to ~ 75 % of the present workforce (a number of surveys came to the same conclusion). Also, from these surveys it became clear that doctors do not want to settle in rural country areas, but rather in middle sized or big cities. The German health ministry has introduced a number of laws, which financially favours practices in country areas and supports all kinds of shared work and work locations to overcome this problem.
- Under the current regulations of the German health system, groups or organizations of doctors can make separate contracts with compulsory health insurance companies for add-on services. Our organization (BVKJ) has placed a number of contracts for additional preventive medical check-ups and vaccinations, which are not covered by compulsory national health insurance thus allowing paediatricians to increase their income (regrettably only through extra work).
- In our mixed system, general practitioners may attend to children and adolescents without paediatric training. In urban areas over 95% of children are seen by paediatricians. This changes with adolescence. However, the vast majority of chronically ill patients < 18 years stay with their paediatricians.
- A law exists that doctors in ambulatory medicine should apply quality management tools. However this law is not enforced, only 3 % of practices decide for audit and certification.
- Delegates of the Medical Association have made a declaration that all doctors who are going to work in ambulatory care should undergo a compulsory period of training in an ambulatory setting. Before this can be implemented it has to be clarified who will pay for this period of training. A group of primary care paediatricians has set out to develop a modern curriculum for training in ambulatory paediatric practices that is competency based according to the instructions of the “Entrustable Professional Activities”.
- The major challenge for German ambulatory paediatricians is to get PCP established at university level.