

Evaluation of developments in health care

Online surveys by a health insurance fund

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Faculty Disclosure

nothing to disclose



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Online surveys by a health insurance fund

1. Health insurance fund & research: why?
2. Research methods
 - A. Exploitation data (DWH)
 - B. Surveys
3. Classical surveys on paper
4. Digital (r)evolution
5. Recommendations



1. Health insurance fund & research: why?

- Health insurance fund : « *Associations of physical persons who promote the physical, psychological and social well-being of their members in a spirit of providence, mutual assistance and solidarity* »
- *more than only a payer = also a player*



1. Health insurance fund & research: why?

- Mapping needs/gaps in health care system = need of solid data = 'evidence based'
- Formulate recommendations for improvement to the government but also to the insurance medicine
- Influence health policy



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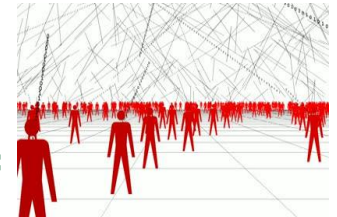
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2.A. Research: Exploitation data (DWH)

- Health insurance fund has mass of data
 - *Administrative data*: age, increased compensation statute (indication of low income), benefits that one receives, ...
 - *Reimbursement data*: GP consultations, specialists, dentists, medicine use, hospitalizations, ...
- Christian Mutuality: health insurance fund (= data of million members) or IMA (Belgian population)
- Limitations of Data Ware House:
 - No diagnoses
 - Administrative data → corrections, input mistakes
 - No out-of-pocket cost for members for ambulant care



Not all relevant information is available in data warehouses



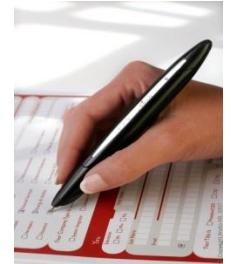
2.B. research: Surveys

- **Need for information directly from the members:**
 - gain insight into non-refundable medical/social costs
 - mapping health behaviours (diet, exercise, coping with emotions, ...)
 - PROM (patient related outcome measurement) and PREM (experience)
 - perception/views on healthcare system ...
 - quality of life/services (chronically ill, care at end of life, ...)
- **Information from our members:**
 - Direct contact in the front office (members defence, social workers, counsellors, ...), signals from the organizations (Ziekenzorg, Altéo)
 - Surveys: In the past: send out a written questionnaire by regular mail
 - Focus groups



3. Classical surveys on paper

✓ Example: Financial impact of the chronically ill in Belgium (2008): issues



- Duration and cost:
 - Manual input of 5,748 questionnaires: duration = 6 months!
 - Cost of research > **80,000 euro** (printing questionnaires, covering letter, postage costs and return costs, outsourcing manual input)
- Only possible every three years, due to large investment in time and money



4. Digital (r)evolution

- **Changing context**
 - IT opens up possibilities (e.g. mass mailings, online questionnaires, ...)
 - Citizens become more 'empowered', partner in health care
 - The press is always looking for the "vox populi" & figures
- **Surveys with thousands of respondents become a major source of information**



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4. Digital (r)evolution



✓ Recent example 1:

- (2013) Survey on the satisfaction with health care providers:
 - Online questionnaire sent by mail (in mail link to the questionnaire)
 - Sample: 200,000 people, representative of the Belgian population
 - 23,660 responses, 12% response rate (only reminders to young adults)
 - Cost:
 - only cost for sending e-mails ($200,000 \times 0.012$ euro = **2.400 euro**)



4. Digital (r)evolution

✓ Recent example 2:

- (2013) Survey of 'out of pocket' paid to specialist:
 - Sample: all members who received a reimbursement for an (ambulant) visit to a specialist
 - between 09/2012 and 06/2013: **686,899 members**
 - Online questionnaire sent by mail: short and simple
 - Available data already entered: patient name, name of specialist, date of visit, official fees, reimbursement CM, co-payment (as stated on reimbursement certificate)
 - Ask for amount paid at the doctor's
 - Demand for knowledge of convention status of specialist consulted
 - **160,000 responses 25% response rate** (106,000 useful and unique individuals)



4. Digital (r)evolution

Strengths of online research:

- **User-friendly/fast tool**
 - **online survey:** send link to respondents and automatic basis analysis of the results collected
 - **paper survey:** enter answers manually afterwards, can take months; alternative of scanning is not possible for every type of questionnaire
- **Cheap way to send questionnaire**
 - Cost savings for printing, postage and (manual) input of answers (at least several 10,000s of euro)
 - Only costs for sending e-mail

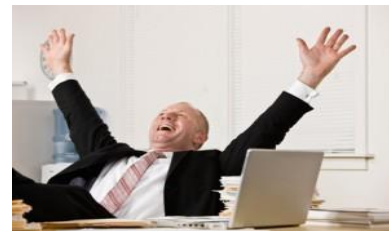


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4. Digital (r)evolution

Strengths of online research:

- Interim results can be consulted at any time
- Results from each respondent who starts the questionnaire, are monitored
 - Possible to identify drop-outs after certain questions / % that fully completes questionnaire
 - = evaluation of the intelligibility/difficulty of questionnaire (Paper surveys: no insight about drop-outs)
- Querying large numbers (10,000s) of respondents possible
 - statements regarding rarer phenomena (e.g. satisfaction with oncologist, cost of implants)
- Direct response/link to events from data files is easy (e.g. examination after reimbursement of consultation with a particular health provider)



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4. Digital (r)evolution

Paper survey

- Response: 25 %
- Expensive
- Big time investment
- Post processing needed
- Limited number of surveys (1,000s)
- Postal address readily available



Online survey

- Response: 10 – 25 %
- Cheap
- Fast processing
- Surveys entered directly
- Large number of surveys possible (10,000s)
- More difficult to have access to e-mail addresses



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4. Digital (r)evolution

Weaknesses of online research:

- **1 million e-mail address known = 31% (<-> address: +/- 100%)**
 - research of specific target groups (e.g. the disabled): sometimes insufficient available e-mail addresses
- **Bias: only people with e-mail address - specific group?**
 - 78% of households have internet access at home and 81% of individuals consult the internet (FPS Economy, barometer of the Information Society, 2013)
- **Sometimes lower response rate: 10% instead of 25% via paper surveys (especially difficult to find young people) but globally more answers**
 - unless they are linked to a particular reimbursement (unregistered payments, dental care): 25% response rate
 - Unless reminder mail



5. Recommendations

- Surveys to be coordinated internally to prevent “survey fatigue”
- Database with e-mail addresses should be constantly updated
- Sample composition and respondents (if necessary: reweighing) must be as representative as possible
- Especially those interested in the subject will respond: be careful with interpretations
- Try to increase response (of certain target groups) by sending e-mail reminder, e.g. if no response after 1 week
- consider test research evt with alternative research methods (written, face-to-face, focus group) -



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Thank you for your attention !



Questions?
Experiences?



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