MONTENEGRO
WHO European Primary Health Care Impact, Performance and Capacity Tool (PHC-IMPACT)

WHO European Framework for Action and Integrated Health Service Delivery
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Abstract
This study examines the structures, performance and impact of primary health care in Montenegro to inform policy decision-making. It applies mixed methods to bring together a range of sources and types of data, including: international and national database data; available reporting and policy documents on Montenegro’s health system; insights from key informant interviews; responses from a survey of practitioners on the model and functioning of primary care; and a consensus-building workshop on findings. The study signals a high burden of cardiovascular diseases and cancer among other noncommunicable diseases for which primary care has an important role to play: in particular, for early detection and risk factor management. Estimates of avoidable hospitalizations for conditions amenable to primary care further underscore the potential for improving primary care performance. By describing existing structures, the study describes the current scope of services provision and the organization and roles of primary care practitioners. The study finds opportunities to extend the range of services in particular for initial risk assessment and diagnostics and makes the case for optimizing the scope of practice of general practitioners (chosen doctors) and nurses working in primary care (patronage and gynaecological nurses). These and other policy recommendations are summarized as key entry points for transforming primary care in Montenegro.

Keywords
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# Contents

Abbreviations .......................................................................................................................... vi

Acknowledgements .................................................................................................................. vii

Preface ........................................................................................................................................ viii

Summary ...................................................................................................................................... x

Introduction ................................................................................................................................. 1
  A snapshot of the current context ............................................................................................... 1
  About this study .......................................................................................................................... 3
  Structure of the report .............................................................................................................. 6

Methods ........................................................................................................................................ 9
  Overview of stages and sources of information ......................................................................... 9
  Study limitations ....................................................................................................................... 14

Health outcomes ......................................................................................................................... 17
  Leading causes of death ........................................................................................................... 17
  Burden of disease and disability ............................................................................................... 19
  Risk factors ............................................................................................................................... 20

Performance of primary care ....................................................................................................... 23
  Quality of care for chronic conditions ..................................................................................... 23
  Estimated coverage and follow-up of services in primary care .............................................. 28

Model of care ............................................................................................................................... 31
  Model of primary care ............................................................................................................. 31
  Primary care services .............................................................................................................. 34
  Design of primary care ............................................................................................................ 40
  Organization of providers ........................................................................................................ 40

System structures ......................................................................................................................... 43
  Primary care clinical guidelines ................................................................................................ 43
  Primary care workforce availability ......................................................................................... 44
  Provider payment mechanisms in primary care ....................................................................... 46
  Data capture and information flows .......................................................................................... 46
  Primary care medicines ............................................................................................................. 47

Highlights .................................................................................................................................... 49
Policy recommendations

Ensuring a competent workforce – the role of chosen doctors

Expanded scope of practice of nurses working in primary care

Enhance diagnosis capacity in primary care

Increase the prescribing capacity in primary care and align with the essential list of medicines

Invest in risk factor management

Ensure a comprehensive package of services for disease prevention, early detection and risk factor management

Enhance the health information infrastructure for monitoring and evaluation

Align incentives

References

Annex 1. Survey results

Tables

Table 1. Priority tracer conditions investigated

Table 2. Topic guide to study and themes covered in this report

Table 3. The assessment draws from more than 10 sources, including national and international databases and existing surveys

Table 4. Codes used for extracting hospitalization data from national databases

Table 5. Overview of the most common ACSC hospitalizations in Montenegro, 2016 and 2017

Table 6. Practitioner-estimated coverage of services in primary care

Table 7. Types of primary health care professionals in Montenegro

Table 8. Availability and provision of counselling services in primary care

Table 9. Availability and provision of risk assessment in primary care

Table 10. Availability and provision of diagnostic examinations in primary care

Table 11. Confirmation of diagnosis in primary care

Table 12. Prescribing authority of chosen doctors for medications for the tracer conditions

Table 13. Availability and provision of follow-up services in primary care

Table 14. Expected practice population and number of chosen doctor teams by type in 2015

Table 15. Population coverage for primary care, 2018
Figures

Fig. 1. The framework underpinning this study ............................................................... 4
Fig. 2. The study's four main stages and respective sources of data ............................ 10
Fig. 3. Profile of survey respondents ............................................................................. 12
Fig. 4. Cardiovascular disease and cancer are the leading causes of death for both men and women ............................................................................................... 18
Fig. 5. Over the past 10 years, atrial fibrillation and Alzheimer's disease have had the greatest increases among the 10 leading causes of death ...... 18
Fig. 6. Tobacco and dietary risks are the top behavioural risk factors for men and women .................................................................................................................. 21
Fig. 7. Men have more hospitalizations for the top-six ACSCs than women across all age categories ........................................................................................................ 25
Fig. 8. Peaks in hospitalizations for the top-six ACSCs among people 20 years and older, 2016 and 2017 ............................................................ 26
Fig. 9. Estimated share of avoidable hospitalizations for the top-six ACSCs in Montenegro .............................................................................................. 27
Fig. 10. Primary care services are distributed across Montenegro with priority referring facilities ......................................................................................... 33
Fig. 11. General practitioners per 100 000 population .................................................. 44
Fig. 12. Flows in the health information system ............................................................. 46
Fig. 13. Overview of the availability and provision of services by primary care practitioners ........................................................................................................ 49
Fig. 14. Cascade of cardiovascular disease services in primary care .......................... 50
Fig. 15. Scope of practice of primary care practitioners ................................................. 51

Abbreviations

ACSC ambulatory care sensitive condition
DALY disability-adjusted life-year
NCD noncommunicable disease
SEEHN South-eastern European Health Network
PHC-IMPACT Primary Health Care Impact, Performance and Capacity Tool
Acknowledgements

This study has been designed by the WHO European Centre for Primary Health Care of the Division of Health Systems and Public Health, in partnership with the WHO Collaborating Centre for Primary Healthcare Systems, Amsterdam University Medical Center, Department of Public Health, University of Amsterdam, Netherlands. It has been developed in the context of the biennial collaborative agreement between the Ministry of Health of Montenegro and the WHO Regional Office for Europe.

Mina Brajovc, WHO Country Office in Montenegro, oversaw all stages of data collection, including gaining access to available information, identifying key informants and disseminating the survey informing this study. Vesna Miranovic, Director-General for Quality Assurance of the Ministry of Health, provided valuable insights and support throughout the process. Sergey Byrchkov, WHO European Office for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases, constructed the online tool used for data collection. Dorjan Marušič, Ministry of Health of Slovenia, contributed to discussions at an expert consensus workshop held in December 2018. Support has also been provided by Ioana Kruse, WHO European Centre for Primary Health Care (tool development and data analysis), Armin Lucevic, Corvinus University of Budapest, Hungary (review) and Natasa Terzic, Institute of Public Health of Montenegro (review).

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Preface

The Primary Health Care Impact, Performance and Capacity Tool (PHC-IMPACT) series aims at leveraging primary health care’s potential to accelerate universal health coverage through health performance intelligence.

At the 66th session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe in 2016, Member States endorsed the WHO European Framework for Action on Integrated Health Services Delivery. The Framework sets out a shortlist of essential areas for transforming services delivery adopting a primary health care approach. Importantly, with the Framework’s endorsement, Member States tasked the WHO Regional Office for Europe to monitor health services delivery transformations in the region through the intensified measurement of relevant indicators (EUR/RC66/RS).

The high-level political commitment to prioritize services delivery strengthening has continued to gain momentum. In 2018, Member States from around the world signalled their commitment to invest in a primary health care approach with the endorsement of the Declaration of Astana. Over the course of 2019, the WHO European Regional Committee, World Health Assembly and UN General Assembly members were each called to act on this commitment. Resolutions at these assemblies urged countries to take concrete measures to implement the Declaration of Astana and ensure progress towards the 2030 Sustainable Development Goal.

In order to work towards the 2030 targets at country-level, primary health care performance measurement has a fundamental role. Without primary health care performance measurement, countries often lack, in practice, the necessary information to monitor and evaluate their options for improvement.

1 Strengthening people-centred health systems in the WHO European Region: framework for action on integrated health services delivery (2016), Regional Committee for Europe 66th session.
3 Accelerating primary health care in the WHO European Region: organizational and technological innovation in the context of the Declaration of Astana (2019), Regional Committee for Europe 69th session.
5 Moving together to build a healthier world (2019), UN high-level meeting on universal health coverage, New York: United States of America.
The PHC-IMPACT series is the WHO Regional Office for Europe’s response to increasing the availability of primary care performance data collected and analysed in an approach that is sensitive to European models, policy priorities and information systems. As part of this series, a range of resources, in English and Russian, are available to support the tailored use of the tool in countries.

- **Technical tools.** The classification of primary care’s impact, performance and capacity according to a set of core domains, features and indicators has been developed through a range of reviews guided by the approach of the WHO European Framework for Action on Integrated Health Services Delivery\(^6\). To support the standardized use of the indicators/questions, two key resources are available: i) individual indicator passports and ii) a glossary of terms. The development of these core technical tools has benefited from close engagement with country and technical experts, acknowledged in the respective publications.

- **Data collection tools.** To support data collection, instruments in the form of online surveys and excel-based data collection tools have been developed. These instruments are available on request for their adapted use in countries.

- **Country reports.** Individual country reports describe findings and policy recommendations following the use of PHC-IMPACT in countries. The reports follow a consistent structure to facilitate the comparability across studies, however, the areas of focus and scope of each country study may vary. Country reports are developed in collaboration with country experts and ministry appointed focal points. Each follows a standard process of data collection, triangulation of findings and expert consensus.

This work is led by the WHO European Centre for Primary Health Care, Almaty, Kazakhstan – the WHO Regional Office for Europe’s technical hub and resource centre for countries on health services delivery. For more information and to continue to follow the work in this series, visit the WHO Regional Office for Europe’s health services delivery web page (http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/Health-systems/health-services-delivery) or contact the Almaty Centre at eurocphc@who.int.

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\(^6\) A detailed description on this review process has been published elsewhere. See: Barbazza E, Kringos D, Kruse I, Klazinga NS, Tello JE (forthcoming). Creating performance intelligence for primary health care strengthening in Europe.
Introduction

Primary health care is a policy priority. Montenegro’s Master Plan for the Development of the Health System 2015–2020 set out a vision to strengthen the country’s primary health care services delivery to meet up to 85% of the population’s health needs. This ambition is well aligned with WHO European Region and global policies and targets on universal health coverage.

Methods

This study set out to explore the status of the impact, performance and capacity of primary health care. Assessing the status of primary health care in an outcome-oriented approach applying a care and performance continuum can offer insights on opportunities to leverage the accelerating potential of primary health care at the root cause of services delivery and system bottlenecks. Using mixed methods, this study creates insights into the following areas: priority health outcomes; current performance gaps in services delivery signalled by rates of avoidable hospitalizations; the status of the current model of care and system structures; and possible policy opportunities to accelerate improvements.

Priority health outcomes

Noncommunicable diseases are the leading burden of disease and, primary care can have a pivotal role in their prevention, risk management and early detection. Noncommunicable diseases are estimated to account for 95% of all deaths. Cardiovascular diseases and cancer account for the largest share of total deaths for both men and women. Specific causes include stroke, ischaemic heart disease and lung cancer.

Smoking is a major preventable behavioural risk factor. Risk factors are predominantly behavioural, especially smoking but also diet and lifestyle. Metabolic factors such as high blood glucose and high body mass index are among the leading risk factors for both men and women. These risk factors further underscore primary care’s key functions of prevention and risk detection.

Performance of primary care

About 50% or more of the hospitalizations for the top ambulatory care sensitive conditions could have been avoided. According to hospitalization data, the leading causes of hospitalizations for ambulatory care sensitive conditions include pneumonia, angina, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, ear, nose and throat infections, diabetes complications and hypertension. Estimates by health practitioners suggest that 50% or more of hospitalizations could have been avoided for five of these six leading causes of ambulatory care sensitive conditions (all except angina).

Estimates on the current coverage of services underscore the limited scope of primary care in risk detection, smoking cessation and mental health services. Services for smoking cessation including quitline services, tobacco cessation medications and specialized tobacco treatment as well as individual risk assessment for cardiovascular disease and treatment and...
follow-up for depression are not consistently provided in primary care. Where patients are detected and diagnosed with conditions such as hypertension and diabetes, follow-up treatments and diagnostic tests are estimated to reach more than 50% of the target population. To what extent the total number of diagnosed patients is in fact representative of those living with these conditions is a confounding factor.

The model of care
Public primary care services are predominantly delivered by general practitioners (chosen doctors for adults in general, children and women (gynaecologists)), midwives (gynaecological nurses) and nurses working in primary care (patronage nurses) and specialist doctors (consulting specialists) and dentists, working across 18 primary care centres in 403 teams (as of 2015). A wide range of counselling and follow-up services are provided by chosen doctors. However, risk assessment, diagnostics and confirmation of diagnosis is within the scope of chosen doctors to a lesser extent. Chosen doctors have a gatekeeping function for consulting specialists, but given their limited scope of practice and that of the nurses, there is high referral to specialists for the tracer conditions investigated.

System structures
The absence of referral criteria in clinical guidelines and lack of financial incentives to stimulate accountability and performance improvement are among key health system structures that hinder the overall capacity of primary care. Investments in the information system are an opportunity for improving the overall development and use of data in decision-making for system learning and improvement.

Policy recommendations
1. Ensure a competent workforce of chosen doctors by investing in the continuous development of the existing workforce, for chosen doctors to be supported in taking responsibility for their practice population.
2. Expand the scope of practice of nurses by engaging nurses in triage and follow-up with patients to make optimal use of their skills and competencies.
3. Enhance the diagnostic capacity of primary care to ensure that chosen doctor-led practices are equipped with the resources and skills to conduct diagnostic testing for priority conditions.
4. Increase the prescribing capacity in primary care to enlarge the resolving capacity of primary care.
5. Invest in risk assessment to effectively manage needs and begin treatment as required.
6. Ensure that a comprehensive range of preventive services are made available in primary care, especially for cardiovascular disease, diabetes and mental health needs.
7. Enhance health information systems to support continuous learning about and improvement of health services delivery, including monitoring and evaluation.
8. Align incentives to stimulate accountability for primary care performance and health outcomes.
Introduction

Primary health care has been made a policy priority in Montenegro’s 2015–2020 Master Plan for the Development of the Health System with the aim to extend coverage to quality, essential health services to meet up to 85% of the population’s health needs.

In the context of national, European and global policy priorities, creating a snapshot on the status of primary health care is found needed to inform priorities for leveraging the accelerating potential of primary health care towards universal health coverage.

This study was designed to explore the capacity, performance and impact of primary health care to resolve priority health needs.

A snapshot of the current context

Montenegro’s public health system is the primary provider of health services to the country’s 628 000 population, spending 6.4% of GDP on health in 2014

The health system is highly centralized, with the Ministry of Health being the primary administrative, regulating and governing authority in the health sector serving the country’s population of more than 628 000 (1). The health system is organized with a split between purchasers and providers and is predominantly public, with few private providers of care. Montenegro’s relatively small private health care sector contrasts with other neighbouring countries. Private providers that are in place are mostly dental clinics and few specialized centres, but data on these centres are largely unavailable. Resources are raised mainly through compulsory wage-based contributions, although there is a substantial share of out-of-pocket spending (2).

In 2014, total expenditure on health as a share of GDP was 6.4% according to WHO estimates (3). Public health expenditure has steadily declined since 2010, although Montenegro’s expenditure on health as a share of GDP is similar to the average of South-eastern Europe Health Network (SEEHN) countries. In 2014, public spending on health accounted for 57% of total expenditure on health care in Montenegro; this is considerably lower than the average in the SEEHN countries of 80%. The share of private expenditure (out-of-pocket payments) was almost 43% in 2014, higher than the average among SEEHN countries (about 33%) that same year (3).

7 The South-eastern European Health Network has 10 members: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Israel, Montenegro, North Macedonia, the Republic of Moldova, Romania and Serbia.
Over utilization of secondary care, suboptimal coverage of essential health services and a narrow scope of practice of general practitioners are among key priorities for services delivery policy

Montenegro’s strategic plan – Master Plan of the Development of the Health System 2015–2020 – recognizes the critical role of health services for improving population health. Reviews of the health system informing the priorities set by the Master Plan signal mismatches between the network of health institutions in terms of population coverage and distribution of the health workforce – with the volume of health workers less than European Union averages in some fields and higher for certain specialist services (4).

High rates of people directly accessing specialized outpatient care are one symptom connected with the suboptimal organization of services described in the Master Plan. The limited scope of practice of general practitioners (chosen doctors*) for treating and managing patients has also been identified as an area for improvement to increase the response capacity of primary care, although this has not yet been studied in depth in practice (4).

Further to the organization of services, international data have signalled the need to extend the coverage of essential health services. A global universal health coverage index has been developed to monitor progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 3 target 3.8.1 on the services component of the universal health coverage index,1 reporting the coverage of essential services for selected tracer services as a composite score. In 2015, coverage of essential health services on this index globally varied widely, from the lowest index value of 22 to the highest index value of 86 (of 100) (6). That same year, Montenegro scored 54 – lower than both the European and global index values (77 and 64 respectively) – scoring well below the median of all countries on services, especially related to tobacco nonsmoking, family planning and HIV treatment.

Importantly, the potential of a primary health care approach to accelerate access to and uptake of quality, affordable health services has garnered primary health care the status of an accelerator to drive progress towards the health-related Sustainable Development Goals (7). This potential has rightly been recognized in the policy priorities informing the Master Plan’s vision and principles for health system strengthening, setting the ambition for primary care services to effectively manage up to 85% of patients’ health needs.

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8 For the purposes of this study, chosen doctor is used synonymously with general practitioner.
9 The universal health coverage service index is a measure of Sustainable Development Goal indicator 3.8.1, coverage of essential health services defined as the average coverage of essential services based on tracer interventions that include reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health, infectious diseases, NCDs and service capacity and access, among the general and most disadvantaged population (5).
Creating a snapshot on the impact, performance and capacity of primary health care to sharpen implementation efforts

Generating health performance intelligence – as the link between data collection, analysis and its use for policy decision-making – is critical to optimally leverage primary health care’s potential in accelerating towards universal health coverage. The availability of health performance information has continued to be expanded as advances are made in health information systems. However, reporting on health services delivery applying international frameworks and standardized measures remains limited. This is evidenced by the few available surveys and reports in English and data sets with up-to-date information.

In this context, in parallel to the implementation of Montenegro’s Master Plan, the opportunity to explore primary care in practice was given priority. This study took shape with the aims of making the best use of available data and addressing system blind spots through targeted data collection with a focus on engaging health practitioners as key informants. The perspective of health practitioners has been given priority, recognizing their frontline expertise on the day-to-day functioning of the system and the need to complement an understanding of the existing structures at the system-level backed by the evidence on the provision of services in practice.

As such, the study was guided by an investigation into the ability of primary care to respond to priority health improvement areas. To do so, the following key questions were explored. What is the current profile of diseases and risk factors amenable to the strength of primary care? What does the performance of primary care signal about the quality of primary care services? How does the capacity of primary care, as the model of care and system structures, align with priority health improvement areas and performance?

The study applied a three-pronged approach to measure primary care’s capacity, performance and impact

This study was guided by the three-pronged approach of the WHO European Framework for Action on Integrated Health Services Delivery (8) and its monitoring framework: the Primary Health Care Impact, Performance and Capacity Tool (PHC-IMPACT) (9). The framework and suite of indicators developed by the WHO European Centre for Primary Health Care work to strengthen links to routine information systems and create primary health care performance intelligence that is tailored to the context of the 53 countries of the European Region.

PHC-IMPACT applies the classical framework of structures, processes and outcomes. In the scope of the tool, these are characterized as the capacity, performance and impact of primary care (Fig. 1). For the purposes of this application, the comprehensive approach of PHC-IMPACT was scoped to priority areas of investigation and existing and available data with a focus on indicators and questions that can be answered by health practitioners. Table 1 details the specific selection of domains, subdomains and features that were given priority for investigation in this study.
Fig. 1. The framework underpinning this study

In the approach of PHC-IMPACT’s care continuum, a set of tracer conditions was applied (Table 1). The set of tracer conditions for the WHO European Region were selected considering their relevance to the overall burden of disease in Europe, responsiveness to the strength of primary care and representativeness of primary care’s functions. For the purposes of this study, attention was also focused on exploring tobacco smoking as a recognized priority risk factor, and ambulatory care sensitive conditions (ACSCs)\(^{10}\) were expanded on, recognizing the quality of care and the intersection of primary care and specialist services as a key policy priority.

The study was supplemented by specific measures drawn from WHO’s survey for assessing the performance of existing tobacco-dependent treatment and the WHO Regional Office for Europe’s approach to assessing ACSCs to generate estimates on avoidability (\(^{11,12}\)).

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\(^{10}\) ACSCs are defined as conditions for which it is possible, to a large extent, to prevent acute exacerbation and reduce the need for hospitalization through strong primary health care-based services delivery. There are varied national lists of ACSCs. A review for international use found the combined, non-country specific list by Bardesley et al. (\(^{11}\)) the most robust for multicountry studies in the European context (\(^{12}\)).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cluster</th>
<th>Condition or services</th>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Target population and life-course*</th>
<th>Gender importance</th>
<th>Type of service</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Reproductive, maternal, neonatal and child health</td>
<td>Postnatal care</td>
<td>Service</td>
<td>Infants; adolescents; adults</td>
<td>Women and infants</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Communicable</td>
<td>Influenza</td>
<td>Vaccine-preventable</td>
<td>Children; older adults</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tuberculosis (TB)</td>
<td>Chronic</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Cardiovascular diseases</td>
<td>Hypertension</td>
<td>Chronic</td>
<td>Adults; older adults</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Heart disease</td>
<td>Chronic</td>
<td>Adults; older adults</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Diabetes</td>
<td>Type 2 diabetes</td>
<td>Chronic</td>
<td>Adults; older adults</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Respiratory</td>
<td>Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease</td>
<td>Chronic</td>
<td>Adults; older adults</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Asthma</td>
<td>Chronic</td>
<td>Childhood onwards</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Cancer</td>
<td>Breast</td>
<td>Chronic</td>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cervical</td>
<td>Vaccine-preventable</td>
<td>Adolescents</td>
<td>Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Colorectal</td>
<td>Chronic</td>
<td>Older adults</td>
<td>Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mental health</td>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>Chronic</td>
<td>Adolescents onwards</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Risk factors</td>
<td>Smoking cessation</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Adults; older adults</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Other ACSCs</td>
<td>Based on hospitalization data</td>
<td>Chronic, acute, vaccine-preventable</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Life-course converted to age ranges: infant (0–1 years old); children (1–10 years old); adolescents (11–19 years old); adults (20–59 years old); older adults (60+ years old).
Structure of the report
The following chapter (methods) describes the process and relevant data sources that informed this study. The remainder of the report is organized in the following chapters. Chapter 3 explores the health context to describe the current burden of disease and risk factors using internationally reported health outcome data. Chapter 4 assesses the performance of primary care, focusing on the quality and utilization of services in primary care based on hospitalization data and expert estimates. Chapter 5 outlines the capacity of primary care according to the current model of primary care. Chapter 6 explores the status of relevant system structures. The seventh chapter highlights cross-cutting findings linking the impact, performance and capacity of primary care. The final chapter presents a series of recommendations to strengthen primary health care.

Table 2. Topic guide to study and themes covered in this report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domains</th>
<th>Subdomains</th>
<th>Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Impact</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health outcomes</td>
<td>Health status and well-being</td>
<td>Mortality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Burden of disease and risk factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance of primary care</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health system outcomes</td>
<td>Quality of care</td>
<td>Avoidable hospitalizations for ACSCs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary care outcomes</td>
<td>Safety of primary care</td>
<td>Medical errors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Medicine safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Effectiveness of primary care</td>
<td>Effective management and control of diseases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Effective smoking-cessation services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care contact</td>
<td>Utilization</td>
<td>Utilization of preventive care and diagnostic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domains</td>
<td>Subdomains</td>
<td>Features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Capacity of primary care</strong></td>
<td><strong>Primary care model of care</strong></td>
<td>Preventive care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Selection of primary care services</td>
<td>Diagnostic procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Treatment</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Management of disease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Patient engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Primary care design</strong></td>
<td>Referral system (including gatekeeping, referral and reply protocols)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Care pathways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Flexible access modes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Shared care plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Primary care workforce organization</strong></td>
<td>Practice population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Primary care teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Collaboration of primary care with other professionals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Primary care structures</strong></td>
<td><strong>Primary care governance</strong></td>
<td>Development of clinical guidelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Primary care financing</td>
<td>Provider payment methods in primary care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Primary care workforce</td>
<td>Primary care workforce planning (type, scope of practice and training)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Primary care workforce availability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Primary care medicines</td>
<td>Availability of medicines in primary care, including tobacco-cessation medications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Primary care information systems</td>
<td>Data capture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Primary care diagnostics</td>
<td>Availability of laboratory tests in primary care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Availability of diagnostic imaging in primary care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Primary care technologies</td>
<td>Availability of basic equipment in primary care</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Methods

This study was performed in four main stages: scanning the available data; conducting key informant interviews; carrying out a survey of practitioners; and convening an expert consensus workshop to validate the findings and preliminary analysis. The findings were triangulated and analysed.

Existing data was drawn on as far as possible. This includes extracting data from national and international databases, surveys, reporting and policy documents available.

Additional data collection has included key informant interviews and an electronic survey targeting health practitioners as key informants on the capacity and performance of primary care in practice. As a final stage, an expert consensus workshop was organized to review and validate the results.

Limited available data ultimately narrowed the scope of the study and the possibility of fully triangulating the findings.

Overview of stages and sources of information

This study was carried out in 2018. The work was completed in the scope of technical assistance provided by the WHO Regional Office for Europe through the WHO European Centre for Primary Health Care in Almaty, Kazakhstan and the WHO Country Office in Montenegro at the request of the Ministry of Health.

The development of the study took a stepwise approach to best tailor the scope and areas of focus to the current context and policy priorities. It was performed in four main stages (Fig. 2): (1) scanning the available data through an initial document (including international reports and assessments, policy documents and presentations) and database review; (2) conducting key informant interviews as a quick scan of policy priority areas; (3) carrying out a practitioner-focused survey tailored to the country context to capture the delivery of primary care services in practice; and (4) convening an expert consensus workshop to validate the findings and preliminary analysis through a structured process of presenting and reviewing survey responses and a preliminary analysis on priority accelerating opportunities. These stages and the respective sources of data and information are described as follows.

Stage one: scanning the available data

Data from national and international databases and existing survey data

The selected indicators for analysis in the scope of the study's topic guide draw from existing, internationally standardized indicators/questions in national and international databases and surveys (Table 3). Data has been extracted for relevant indicators from international databases for the most recent year. Available survey data from 2015 and onward was also consulted, providing insights specifically on the national health information system (13,14).
This study used ACSCs as a proxy for measuring the quality of primary care as unnecessary hospital admissions, suggesting a lack of uniformity in the patterns of referral and admission procedures and inadequate management of conditions in primary care. WHO has applied the list of ACSCs from Bardlesy et al. (11) (Table 4) in a series of multicountry studies on this topic (12).

From national databases, the Institute for Public Health provided hospital discharge data representing all seven general hospitals and one of three specialized hospitals (Brezevic for pulmonary diseases) for 2016 and 2017. These data are reported as the total number of hospital discharges and were extracted for ACSCs, as indicated in a list of ACSCs by Bardlesy et al. (12). The data have been disaggregated by sex and age and geographical region at the level of municipalities.

### Table 3. The assessment draws from more than 10 sources, including national and international databases and existing surveys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Database</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National database</td>
<td>Institute for Public Health</td>
<td>2016, 2017</td>
<td>Institute for Public Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International databases</td>
<td>Eurostat database</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>European Commission (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>World Population Prospects Database</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>United Nations (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>European Health for All database</td>
<td>2015, 2016</td>
<td>WHO Regional Office for Europe (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Global Health Observatory</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>WHO (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Global Burden of Disease Database</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Universal Health Coverage Portal</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>WHO (19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Antimicrobial medicines consumption network data</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>WHO Regional Office for Europe (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Global Health Estimates</td>
<td>2015, 2016</td>
<td>WHO (21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existing surveys</td>
<td>Data scanning survey: health services delivery data in the WHO European Region</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>WHO Regional Office for Europe (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Global survey on eHealth</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>WHO (14)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 4. Codes used for extracting hospitalization data from national databases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACSC</th>
<th>Corresponding ICD-10 codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angina</td>
<td>I20, I240, I248, I249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asthma</td>
<td>J45, J46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cellulitis</td>
<td>L03, L04, L08, L88, L980, L983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease</td>
<td>J41–J44, J47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congestive heart failure</td>
<td>I110, I50, J81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convulsions and epilepsy</td>
<td>G40, G41, O15, R56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dental conditions</td>
<td>A690, K02–K06, K08, K098, K099, K12, K13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diabetes (in any field)</td>
<td>E119, E109, E1165, E1065</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gastroenteritis</td>
<td>K522, K528, K529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypertension</td>
<td>I100, I119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immunization-preventable conditions</td>
<td>J10, J11, A15, A16, A19, A35–A37, A80, B05, B06, B16.1, B169, B180, B18.1, B26, G000, M014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron deficiency anaemia</td>
<td>D501, D508, D509</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kidney or urinary infection</td>
<td>N10, N11, N12, N136, N390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutritional deficiency</td>
<td>E40–E43, E55, E643</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pelvic inflammatory disease</td>
<td>N70, N73, N74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pneumonia</td>
<td>J13, J14, J153, J154, J157, J159, J168, J181, J188</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Existing reports and normative documents

Reporting on health services delivery and the health system is relatively limited. To include materials that are available, the documents reviewed ranged considerably by type (legislation, assessments, reports and presentations), language (English and Montenegrin) and status of publication (published and drafts). Documents were collected in large part through the repository of documents stored by the WHO Country Office in Montenegro and the WHO Library Database (WHOLIS). Documents in Montenegro were initially reviewed using Google Translate to determine their relevance and, where needed, underwent full or partial translation. The study has also relied on key normative policy documents on health services delivery.
Stage two: conducting key informant interviews

To complement the document review, face-to-face key informant interviews were conducted in May 2018. About 10 interviews were held with informants representing the following: from the national perspective, the Ministry of Health, Institute for Public Health and Health Insurance Fund; and from the health professional perspective: health practitioners and facility managers from three primary health care centres, one city hospital and the Clinical Centre of Montenegro.

The aim of the semistructured interviews was to gather information to identify and set priorities for policy areas for strengthening primary health care. The topic of each interview was tailored to the informant, ranging from the status of the delivery of primary care services, sources of current challenges, roles and responsibilities of different health system actors and identifying possible solutions. Once the interviews were completed, common themes were identified by analysing interview notes.

Stage three: carrying out a survey of health practitioners

To supplement available data and information gathered through key informant interviews, a survey was designed to capture the current capacity and performance of primary health care in practice from the perspective of frontline practitioners. Survey data on health practitioners were otherwise not available. This method was selected as an approach to increase the number of perspectives captured while also assuring the anonymity of respondents relative to key informant interviews.

A survey was designed drawing from three existing survey instruments: PHC-IMPACT (22), WHO’s survey for assessing the performance of existing tobacco-dependent treatment and the WHO Regional Office for Europe’s approach to assessing ACSCs (11). A total of 66 questions were selected and organized into five sections spanning the following topics: (1) mapping the model of primary health care; (2) the capacity of primary care; (3) the performance of primary care; (4) delivery of tobacco-cession ser-

Fig. 3. Profile of survey respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chosen doctor/pediatrician</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of Centre</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National institutes</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
vices; and (5) the status of ACSCs. The survey was adapted to the context through a detailed technical review, resulting in the accommodation of national terms such as chosen doctor and chosen paediatrician into a refined glossary of terms and adjusted answer categories. The reviewed survey was translated into Montenegrin and built online so that answers could be completed and stored electronically.

A total of 34 informants were identified through a sampling of primary health care facilities spanning three different networks, including the city of Kotor to the west, the capital city Podgorica and the city of Berane to the north-east. Respondents included chosen doctors and paediatricians, nurses, specialists and management (Fig. 3). Two respondents were engaged from the policy perspective and used as comparators.

The survey was administered electronically in October 2018. Each respondent received a personalized survey link to submit their answers and general comments. The survey was administered with in-person support of the study’s team, providing one-on-one technical guidance for respondents while completing the survey.

In the scope of generating estimates for ACSCs, survey respondents were presented with the prevalence and hospitalization rate for the top-six ACSCs in 2016 and 2017. Respondents were informed that not all hospitalizations for ACSCs can be prevented by effective ambulatory care, since patient-level factors also play an important role. Taking this into consideration, they were asked to estimate the percentage of hospitalizations for each ACSC that could have been prevented by quality primary care services, considering potential exogenous factors and based on their professional experience.

All responses were extracted from the online survey platform for analysis in Excel. For the purposes of analysis, answers completed as “do not know” or incomplete were excluded from the total response rate. Answers were reviewed and confirmed as final answers by variable if more than 75% of the complete responses were in agreement. If agreement was less than 75%, this was flagged for discussion at a consensus workshop described later. Comments were translated to English where needed. Annex 1 provides a full record of responses following this analysis.

Stage four: convening an expert consensus workshop to validate findings and preliminary analysis

In December 2018, a structured expert consensus workshop and discussion on findings was organized in the capital city of Podgorica. Participants included initial survey respondents together with additional representatives from local primary care centres and the Ministry of Health.

At the workshop, survey responses were presented anonymously for questions for which there was not clear agreement on a final answer. The assessment team moderated the sessions, and the final answers, based on the group’s discussions, were recorded. Building on preliminary observations and the final answers following discussions, the group discussed cross-cutting messages as priority areas of focus for strengthening primary health care. These discussion points have informed the recommendations put forward that have been supplemented by further analysis of all collected data.

All data and information were consolidated for further analysis and reporting. The findings were synthesized in the structure of the study’s underpinning framework. The findings are reported with attention to note the original sources. The results were assessed along the performance and care continuums of the underpinning assessment framework. A final technical review supported by national experts aimed to ensure the accuracy of results and to address information gaps.
Study limitations

Although Montenegro’s health information system has improved, available, internationally comparable data remain limited. Moreover, reporting in English on Montenegro’s health system is sparse. The reports and normative policy documents in Montenegro that were recommended by key informants and survey respondents and available electronically were translated online and reviewed to overcome this. The limited availability of data has a few consequences. One, the study has relied considerably on survey data and the estimates generated through a structured process of expert consensus. Two, there was limited possibility to triangulate findings through a comparison across data sources. Three, some gaps in information could not be overcome. Four, the search for documents in Montenegro was based solely on a snowballing of recommendations and may the exclude other available literature.

As previously stated, the scope of this study was tailored to policy priorities and available data. In effect, the study did not explore all possible areas of investigation, such as health services management and quality improvement, which merit further investigation. Importantly, this includes also the exclusion of patient-reported outcome and experience measures since these data were not available despite their recognized importance and relevance to PHC-IMPACT for measuring the patient-centredness of the services provided.

Data on pharmaceuticals were also unavailable. Prescribing data in primary care are also recognized as an important area of further research in the context of regional and global policy priorities on antimicrobial resistance. Assessment of the private-sector services was also excluded for reasons of scale relative to the public sector but could be explored given its importance, especially in relation to pharmaceuticals. Although hospitalizations for ACSCs were included for measuring performance, priority conditions were not explored in full across the care pathway in a similar way as other tracer conditions due to the availability of information and possibility to fully tailor the tool to capture these priority areas.

Moreover, this application of PHC-IMPACT is part of the initial piloting of the instrument following a preliminary country test. As such, the indicators and questions continue to be improved on. This includes standardizing a protocol for the expert consensus workshop, drawing lessons on the allocation of time, presentation of results and facilitation of the discussion. A full review of the initial piloting of PHC-IMPACT in countries will be reported elsewhere.
Health outcomes

Noncommunicable diseases are the leading causes of death, especially stroke, ischaemic heart disease and lung cancer.

The top-six leading causes of years lived with disability in 2017 included lower back pain, falls, diabetes, headache disorders, age-related hearing loss and depressive disorders.

Smoking is the number one risk factor driving most deaths and disability both for men and women. Lung cancer is also the leading cause of cancer-related deaths.

Other leading behavioural risk factors include dietary risks and alcohol use, and leading metabolic risk factors include high blood pressure, high fasting plasma glucose and high body mass index.

Leading causes of death

The top-10 causes of death in Montenegro are all related to noncommunicable diseases

Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) cause most deaths in Montenegro, mostly cardiovascular diseases and cancer (Fig. 4). In 2016, NCDs accounted for an estimated 95% of all deaths (23). Women have a slightly greater risk of dying from cardiovascular diseases than men (62% and 54% of total deaths, respectively). Although cancer is the second leading cause of death for both men and women, men are affected to a greater extent (25% and 18% of total deaths, respectively). Between 2007 and 2017, the top-10 leading causes of death have remained the same, although with the largest increases in atrial fibrillation (43% change) and Alzheimer’s disease (42% change) (Fig. 5).
Fig. 4. Cardiovascular disease and cancer are the leading causes of death for both men and women

![Chart showing the leading causes of death for women and men. Women have 3112 deaths (2017) with cardiovascular diseases accounting for 62%, cancer 14%, respiratory diseases 18%, digestive system 2%, injuries 2%, and other causes 1%. Men have 3390 deaths (2017) with cardiovascular diseases accounting for 54%, cancer 12%, respiratory diseases 25%, digestive system 3%, injuries 1%, and other causes 1%

Source: IHME (18).

Fig. 5. Over the past 10 years, atrial fibrillation and Alzheimer’s disease have had the greatest increases among the 10 leading causes of death

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2007 ranking</th>
<th>2017 ranking</th>
<th>% change 2007-2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stroke</td>
<td>Stroke</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ischemic heart disease</td>
<td>Ischemic heart disease</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lung cancer</td>
<td>Lung cancer</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alzheimer’s disease</td>
<td>Alzheimer’s disease</td>
<td>41.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardiomyopathy</td>
<td>Cardiomyopathy</td>
<td>28.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diabetes</td>
<td>Diabetes</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorectal cancer</td>
<td>Colorectal cancer</td>
<td>22.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic kidney disease</td>
<td>Chronic kidney disease</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breast cancer</td>
<td>Breast cancer</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atrial fibrillation</td>
<td>Atrial fibrillation</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Burden of disease and disability

Stroke and ischaemic heart disease are leading causes of death for men and women

Cardiovascular diseases are the leading cause of death (Fig. 5) and disability-adjusted life-years (DALYs); specifically stroke (14% of total DALYs) and ischaemic heart disease (12% of total DALYs) in 2017 (18). In the WHO European Region, ischaemic heart disease (12%) and stroke (6%) were also the leading causes of DALYs in 2017, although notably, the percentage of DALYs for stroke in Montenegro is double that of the European average.

Ischaemic heart disease is the number one cause of total DALYs among men, and stroke is the number one cause among women. Stroke was among the most rapidly rising causes of years of life lost since 2000.

Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer-related deaths

After cardiovascular diseases, cancer is the leading cause of death for both men and women. In 2017, lung cancer was the third leading cause of death, contributing to 7% of all deaths that year (18). In the WHO European Region, lung cancer was the fourth leading cause of death in 2017, contributing to 5% of all deaths. Importantly, the rate of DALYs caused by lung cancer in Montenegro is three times higher among men than women; 2506 versus 833 per 100,000 population, respectively (18).

Type 2 diabetes is a leading cause of years lived with disease

The burden of type 2 diabetes has gradually increased since 2000. In 2017, it was the third leading cause (after lower back pain and falls) of years of life lived with disease and disorders (years lived with disability) at 6% of total years lived with disability, slightly higher than the percentage of the WHO European Region at 5% of total years lived with disability. According to 2014 data, 9% of people 18 years and older in Montenegro were reported to have raised blood glucose (23).

While respiratory diseases are not among the top-10 causes of years lived with disability, in 2017 chronic obstructive pulmonary disease contributed to 3% of total years lived with disability, up 12% from 2000

In 2017, respiratory diseases were not among the top-10 leading causes of years lived with disability or DALYs. Nevertheless, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease is the leading cause of years lived with disability and DALYs for respiratory conditions and is among the most rapidly rising conditions between 2000 and 2017 (18). This change is especially pronounced among men, rising to 3% of total years lived with disability (18% increase from 2000 to 2017) with women also being at 3% of total years lived with disability (6% increase from 2000 to 2017) (18).
Depressive disorders are among leading causes of years lived with disability, although the accuracy of reporting remains a challenge in the entire European Region.

In 2017, self-harm was among the top 10 causes of premature mortality in Montenegro, at 363 per 100 000 population (18). Depressive disorders were the sixth leading cause of disability, after lower back pain, falls, diabetes, headache disorders and age-related hearing loss (18). Importantly, this ranking varies for men and women: depressive disorders rank 12th for men (3% of total years lived with disability) and the fifth leading cause for women (4% of total years lived with disability) in 2017. The percentage of total years lived with disability for depressive disorders for both men and women is slightly lower (4% of total years lived with disability) than the WHO European Region average (5% of total years lived with disability), although it is widely recognized that detection and reporting across the WHO European Region is an area of ongoing improvement.

Risk factors

Smoking is a major preventable risk factor

Similar to other European countries, Montenegro has a high prevalence of behavioural risk factors. Tobacco accounts for 24% of the overall burden of disease in 2017 (measured in DALYs) (18) (Fig. 6). Dietary risks and alcohol use are also among the top three behavioural risk factors (18). In 2016, an estimated nearly 60% of the population (18 years and older) was overweight and 23% obese (23).

According to a 2012 household survey, the prevalence of smoking among people 15 years and older was 31% (35% for men and 27% for women). Compared with 2013 data for the WHO European Region, the prevalence of smoking is slightly above the WHO European Region average at 29% but below that of SEEHN countries (33%) (3). According to more recent WHO data from 2016, 48% of men and 44% of women 15 years and older reported currently smoking, for an average of 46% of people 15 years and older (23).
**Fig. 6. Tobacco and dietary risks are the top behavioural risk factors for men and women**

Source: IHME (18).

Other behavioural risk factors include dietary risk and alcohol use (Fig. 6). According to WHO data, in 2016 the total per capita alcohol consumption of people 15 years and older was 13 litres (of pure alcohol) for men and 3 for women (23). The three leading metabolic risk factors include high body mass index, high fasting plasma glucose and high systolic blood pressure.
Performance of primary care

The top six ACSCs leading to hospitalization are pneumonia, angina, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, ear, nose and throat infections, diabetes complications and hypertension. They account for 67% of the total of hospitalization for ACSCs.

Hospitalizations for ACSC are higher among men than women.

The older population has the highest rates of hospitalizations for the top-six ACSCs, especially angina, hypertension and diabetes complications.

Estimates of the coverage of services signal important areas of focus for services currently unavailable in primary care, specifically, quitline services and specialized tobacco dependence treatment, cardiovascular disease risk assessment, human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination and screening and treatment for depression.

Quality of care for chronic conditions

Pneumonia, angina and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease were the top causes of hospitalization for ACSCs in 2017

In Montenegro, 14,434 patients were discharged from hospital for the ACSCs assessed in this study in 2016 and 14,384 in 2017 (Table 4). In 2017, the top six conditions leading to hospitalizations were the following (total number of hospitalizations): pneumonia (2,484), angina (1,906), chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (1,566), ear, nose and throat infections (1,361), diabetes complications (1,354), and hypertension (950) (24) (Table 5). Together these conditions accounted for 67% of all ACSC hospitalizations. The same conditions caused most hospitalizations in 2016, although in a different order (total number of hospitalizations): pneumonia (2,181), angina (1,889), diabetes complications (1,675), chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (1,519), ear, nose and throat infections (1,480) and hypertension (980). They again accounted for 67% of all ACSC-related hospitalizations.
Table 5. Overview of the most common ACSC hospitalizations in Montenegro, 2016 and 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACSCs</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of</td>
<td>Number of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>hospitalizations</td>
<td>hospitalizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% of total</td>
<td>% of total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pneumonia</td>
<td>2,181</td>
<td>2,484</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angina</td>
<td>1,889</td>
<td>1,906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease</td>
<td>1,519</td>
<td>1,566</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ear, nose and throat infections</td>
<td>1,480</td>
<td>1,361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diabetes complications</td>
<td>1,675</td>
<td>1,354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypertension</td>
<td>980</td>
<td>950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convulsions and epilepsy</td>
<td>666</td>
<td>710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kidney and urinary infection</td>
<td>655</td>
<td>685</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron deficiency</td>
<td>648</td>
<td>645</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congestive heart failure</td>
<td>525</td>
<td>582</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asthma</td>
<td>463</td>
<td>410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gastroenteritis</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cellulitis</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perforated or bleeding ulcer</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaccine-preventable conditions</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dental conditions</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other vaccine-preventable conditions</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gangrene</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TB</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pelvic inflammatory disease</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dehydration</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutritional deficiency</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total hospitalizations</strong></td>
<td>14,434</td>
<td>14,384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Institute for Public Health, Montenegro.
In 2017, hospitalizations were higher among men than women across all top-six ACSCs and age categories (Fig. 7). The pattern was similar in 2016. The analysis of ACSC hospitalizations by age groups shows two peaks, the first among children younger than five years. Reviewed by causes, these hospitalizations are mostly from ear, nose, throat infections and pneumonia. Importantly, hospitalizations for this age group are not mandatory. Decisions for the hospitalization of children should be based on combined consideration for the age, clinical status and possibilities for home treatment according to clinical practice guidelines. The second peak of hospitalizations is among people 60–69 years old.

**Fig. 7. Men have more hospitalizations for the top-six ACSCs than women across all age categories**

![Graph showing hospitalizations for men and women in 2016 and 2017](image)

**Note:** top-six ACSCs by age group and sex.

**Source:** Institute for Public Health, Montenegro.
For the population 20 years and older, the peak in hospitalizations among people 60-69 years old results from angina, diabetes complications, pneumonia and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (Fig. 8).

Fig. 8. Peaks in hospitalizations for the top-six ACSCs among people 20 years and older, 2016 and 2017

Note: top-six hospitalizations by age group. COPD: chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.
Source: Institute for Public Health, Montenegro.
Health practitioners in Montenegro estimate that more than half of the most frequent hospitalization for ACSCs could have been avoided

Based on hospitalization data for 2016 and 2017, a set of six priority ACSCs that together account for about 67% of ACSC hospitalizations in 2017 were selected for further study: ear, nose and throat infections, diabetes complications, pneumonia, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, hypertension and angina. The number of hospitalizations for these six ACSCs were presented to health practitioners responding to the survey. The estimated avoidability of hospitalization for these conditions was calculated as an average across respondents and presented at the expert consensus workshop for validation.

According to the final estimates in this study, the average degree of preventability of hospitalization for ACSCs ranged from 36% (angina) to 68% (ear, nose and throat infections) (Fig. 9). For three conditions (ear, nose and throat infections; diabetes complications and pneumonia) the estimated share of avoidable hospitalizations is about 60%. Importantly, these estimates exclude hospitalizations for ear, nose and throat infections because hospitalizing children is mandatory.

Compared with existing studies of countries in the WHO European Region (25–28), the estimated share of avoidable hospitalizations in Montenegro for diabetes (61%) is higher than in Latvia (39%) and in the Republic of Moldova (40%) but lower than in Germany (81%). The estimated shares of avoidable hospitalizations are 55% for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and 50% for hypertension. The estimated share of avoidable hospitalizations for hypertension in Montenegro is lower than in the United Kingdom (60–90%), Portugal (66%), the Republic of Moldova (70%), Kazakhstan (75%) and Germany (83%).

Fig. 9. Estimated share of avoidable hospitalizations for the top-six ACSCs in Montenegro

Note: Answered according to expert consensus. COPD: chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.
Estimated coverage and follow-up of services in primary care

Overall, experts estimate that chosen doctors handle 10-50% of total contacts solely without referrals to other health professionals. The consensus method applied also generated estimates for the utilization and coverage of preventive care, treatment and follow-up services (Table 6).

Table 6. Practitioner-estimated coverage of services in primary care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tracer conditions</th>
<th>Not available</th>
<th>&lt;10% of the target population</th>
<th>10-50% of the target population</th>
<th>More than 50% but less than 70% of the target population</th>
<th>≥70% of the target population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Smoking cessation</td>
<td>Quitline services</td>
<td>Six-month quit rate</td>
<td></td>
<td>Counselling services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Specialized tobacco-dependence treatment</td>
<td>12-month quit rate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardiovascular diseases</td>
<td>Individual risk assessment (ad hoc)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Secondary prevention/high-risk control</td>
<td>Controlled blood pressure six months after treatment initiation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cancer</td>
<td>HPV vaccination</td>
<td>Cervical cancer screening</td>
<td>Breast cancer screening</td>
<td>Colon cancer screening</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diabetes</td>
<td>Eye exams</td>
<td>Foot exams</td>
<td>Blood glucose under control at last visit</td>
<td>Blood pressure measurement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Urine protein test</td>
<td>Overweight screening</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Follow-up visit for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease</td>
<td>Lung function measurement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health</td>
<td>Depression treatment coverage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Depression treatment follow-up</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Answered according to survey respondents and workshop participants. Annex 1 specifies the target population by the respective service.
Accordingly, for smoking-cessation services, a primary care health professional advises an estimated 50–70% of smokers 15 years and older to quit smoking, but less than 10% of smokers are estimated to quit for at least six or 12 months from these brief advice interventions. Importantly, services such as quitline services, tobacco-cessation medications and specialized tobacco treatment are reportedly not available.

For cardiovascular diseases, the greatest barrier to effective management is reportedly individual risk assessment, since respondents indicate that this service is not currently in place and provided only on an ad-hoc basis. For people identified as being at risk, practitioners estimate that 10–50% of those who are eligible receive drug therapy and counselling (including glycaemic control). For the people who are detected and registered as hypertensive, more than 70% are estimated to have a controlled blood pressure status at six months. Importantly, without a service in place for standardized risk detection, the number of people diagnosed is likely underestimated.

The practitioners estimated that more than 50% but less than 70% of people older than 18 years with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease had a follow-up visit in primary care. Similarly, the surveyed practitioners reported that more than 50% but less than 70% of the people with hypertension older than 18 years had a follow-up consultation in primary care (excluding visits only for refilling medication) in the 12-month reference period.

For people with type 2 diabetes 18 years and older, practitioners estimated that 70% or more had their blood pressure and weight screened in primary care in the previous year. Fewer (50–70%) were estimated to have had a urine protein test and foot exam and even fewer (less than 10%) an eye exam in the previous year. Ultimately, 10–50% of people with type 2 diabetes 18 years and older are estimated to have had their blood glucose under control at their last visit.

For mental health services, chosen doctors do not provide depression treatment and follow-up. This may indicate an area of high unmet need.
Model of care

Primary care services are delivered by general practitioners (chosen doctors for adults in general, children and women (gynaecologists)); midwives (gynaecological nurses) and nurses working in primary care (patronage nurses); specialist doctors (consulting specialists); and dentists.

The services available in primary care vary by type, with diverse counselling and follow-up services and, to a lesser extent, risk assessment, diagnostics and prescribing. Risk assessment in primary care is limited; primary care practitioners do not systematically provide such services as cardiovascular risk assessment and stratification and mental health risk assessment. Diagnostic examinations in primary care are also limited, and this area is currently being given priority, with attention focused on improving the training and skill set of chosen doctors.

Chosen doctors act as a gatekeeper for specialist services. However, responses from practitioners indicate that patients often access specialists directly. This contributes to repeat tests and hinders coordination and continuity.

Primary care practices (clinics) are organized as group practices, totalling 403 (as of 2015), comprising chosen doctors and nurses working at 18 primary health care centres across the country and supported by a range of supporting centres of consulting specialists.

Model of primary care

In 2003, the delivery of health services underwent a major reform, introducing the approach to primary care that is still in place today. Specifically, the role of chosen doctors as primary care providers equivalent to general practitioners was introduced as well as their function as the gatekeeper to the health system (2). Key policy documents guiding the area of health services delivery include the Law on Health Care Protection (Official Gazette of Montenegro, No. 39/2004, 14/10) and the Law on Health Insurance (Official Gazette of Montenegro, No. 39/2004, 14/12).

The Law on Health Care Protection (Official Gazette of Montenegro, No. 39/2004, 14/10) stipulates the health professionals working in primary care. According to legislation, primary care services are delivered by (Table 7): general practitioners (chosen doctors for adults in general, children and women (gynaecologists)); midwives (gynaecological nurses) and nurses working in primary care (patronage nurses); specialist doctors (consulting and supporting specialists); and dentists. Consulting specialists to primary care include social workers, psychologists, specialist doctors, physiotherapists and occupational therapists. Public health professionals working in primary care include epidemiologists and sanitary technicians.
Table 7. Types of primary health care professionals in Montenegro

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Local terms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General practitioners</td>
<td>Chosen doctors (adults)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paediatricians</td>
<td>Chosen doctors (children)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwives</td>
<td>Gynaecological nurses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurses</td>
<td>Patronage nurses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social workersa</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychologistsa</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist doctors</td>
<td>Consulting specialists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dietitian</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physiotherapists in ambulatory settingsa</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational therapistsa</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dentists</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public health professionalsa</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: gynaecologists</td>
<td>Chosen doctors (women)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Answered according to the policy regulating practitioners working in primary care (Law on Health Care Protection, Official Gazette of Montenegro, No. 39/2004, 14/10) and tailored to the country context according to survey respondents.

*Consulting specialists include psychologists, endocrinologists, ophthalmologists, laboratory specialists, radiologists, occupational specialists and sanitary specialists.*
Primary care services are provided by 18 centres and a network of supporting centres with consulting specialists

In Montenegro, health services are provided at the following types of public facilities: one clinical centre in Podgorica; seven general hospitals; three specialized hospitals; and 18 primary health care centres called dom zdravlja (home health centres) (Fig. 10). Other public health service organizations include the Institute for Public Health, Emergency Medical Assistance, 55 public pharmacies called Montefarm, Institute for Health Emergencies and the Blood Transfusion Institute.

Fig. 10. Primary care services are distributed across Montenegro with priority referring facilities

Source: Ministry of Health, Montenegro (29).
Primary care services

Counselling services
A range of counselling services are offered in primary care (Table 8). These include services for tobacco, physical activity, intake of salt, consumption of fruits and vegetables, use of alcohol, bodyweight, family planning services, and psychological counselling for mental disorders.

Counselling services are predominately provided by chosen doctor, having a role in the provision of all available counselling services. Nurses are reportedly responsible to a lesser extent in the provision of counselling services. When counselling services are provided by nurses this currently takes a focus on dietary intake, with nurses at supporting centres having a role in counselling and early detection of patients with type 2 diabetes. Supporting centres are organized differently throughout Montenegro and the scope of services provided by nurses ultimately varies by facility (primary health care centre and supporting centres).

Counselling services for mental health are the role of supporting specialist. Dedicated supporting centres on mental are the primary responsible authority for the provision of psychological counselling.

Table 8. Availability and provision of counselling services in primary care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Counselling services</th>
<th>Available in primary care</th>
<th>Health professionals providing service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chosen doctor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>×</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical activity</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>×</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intake of salt</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>×</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumption of fruits and vegetables</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>×</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of alcohol</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>×</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodyweight</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>×</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family planning</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>×</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological counselling for mental disorders</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>−</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

×: health professionals providing service.

Source: answered according to survey respondents and expert consensus.
Risk assessment
On a whole, risk assessment for early detection and screening is quite limited for the tracer conditions applied. There is no cardiovascular disease population risk assessment, population risk stratification or hypertension total risk approach for managing individuals at high risk of heart attack and stroke in primary care. Workshop participants described the legal requirement to report cardiovascular events to the Institute for Public Health, the responsible authority of the registry for cardiovascular disease and diabetes. This practice, however, does not capture the intention of risk assessment services intended for initial risk detection.

For mental health, risk assessments are primarily provided by supporting specialists, although HEADSS assessment (home, education and employment, eating, activities, drug use, sexual activity, suicide and depression and safety) for adolescents is not currently in use according to survey respondents and workshop participants.

For diabetes risk detection, risk prediction charts are currently provided in primary care and delivered solely by chosen doctors. Although it was recognized that nurses could provide diabetes risk detection services during home visits to patients, workshop participants described a lack of incentives to do so.

Table 9. Availability and provision of risk assessment in primary care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk assessments</th>
<th>Available in primary care</th>
<th>Health professionals providing service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chosen doctor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual physical examination or health evaluation</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>×</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardiovascular disease risk assessment</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardiovascular risk stratification</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypertension detection using a risk prediction chart</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type 2 diabetes detection using a total risk approach</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>×</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detecting TB symptoms in at-risk populations</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health risk assessment</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEADSS assessment for adolescents</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

×: health professionals providing service.
Source: answered according to survey respondents and expert consensus.
Diagnostic services in primary care

The range of diagnostic services provided in primary care is limited. Of the nine diagnostic examinations considered relevant for the tracer conditions applied, only two are available from chosen doctors (electrocardiography and peak flow measurement). Workshop participants report plans to train chosen doctors and paediatricians to deliver ultrasound services in the future.

Additional services, including dilated fundus examination, peak flow measurement, X-ray and ultrasounds are available through consulting specialists at supporting centres. This means that, for such conditions as diabetes, the clinics of chosen doctors do not perform diagnostic tests such as dilated fundus examination and Doppler ultrasound for foot vascular status, although workshop participants recognized the potential for chosen doctor providing these tests (Table 10).

Diagnostic tests performed by nurses in primary care are limited. Of the diagnostic examinations surveyed, nurses reportedly perform only electrocardiography.

Consulting specialists provide a wider array of tests at specialized centres. For example, the specialized centre for lung diseases performs several diagnostic tests, including peak flow measurement, oximetry and spirometry. Access to the lung centre requires referral from a chosen doctor and ultimately means first accurately detecting the need for these tests.

Table 10. Availability and provision of diagnostic examinations in primary care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diagnostic examination</th>
<th>Available in primary care</th>
<th>Health professionals providing service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chosen doctors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dilated fundus examination</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doppler ultrasound for foot vascular status</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrocardiography</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>×</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peak flow measurement</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pulse oximetry</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>×</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular ultrasound</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sigmoidoscopy</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spirometry</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X-ray</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

×: health professionals providing service.

Source: answered according to survey respondents and expert consensus.
A chosen doctor has the authority to diagnose type 2 diabetes and hypertension. For the other tracer conditions explored, a specialist doctor must confirm the diagnosis. For example, the chosen doctor’s role in chronic obstructive pulmonary disease is limited to initially detecting symptoms, and a supporting centre confirms the diagnosis.

Table 11. Confirmation of diagnosis in primary care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Confirmation of diagnosis</th>
<th>Available in primary care</th>
<th>Health professionals providing service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chosen doctor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypertension</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>×</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ischaemic heart disease</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type 2 diabetes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>×</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asthma</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cancer – breast</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cancer – cervical</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cancer – colorectal</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TB</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

×: health professionals providing service.

Source: answered according to survey respondents and expert consensus.
Prescribing by chosen doctors

The prescribing authority of chosen doctors was explored according to relevant medications for the set of tracer conditions studied. According to survey respondents, based on existing protocols, chosen doctors may prescribe a range of medications related to treating people with cardiovascular diseases except statins. For statins, a specialist must initially recommend prescription, and the chosen doctor may prescribe refills.

However, survey respondents and stakeholder interviews outline a situation in which chosen doctors may not carry out the initial prescriptions for most of the ACSCs. For medications related to diabetes and respiratory diseases, chosen doctors may not prescribe common medicines such as insulin and metformin for people with diabetes; the initial prescription from a specialist is required, although chosen doctors may issue refills. Chosen doctors must refer patients to specialists for initial prescriptions.

For medications related to treating people with mental health conditions (antipsychotic agents for psychotic disorders, antidepressants for depression and anxiety disorders, anxiolytic agents and anticonvulsant medicines for bipolar disorders), initial prescriptions and refills require the recommendation of specialists. The same applies to oral morphine.

Importantly, only specialists may prescribe medications for treating people with drug-susceptible TB, and nicotine replacement therapy is reportedly not available.

Table 12. Prescribing authority of chosen doctors for medications for the tracer conditions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>May prescribe and refill without recommendation from a specialist doctor</th>
<th>Can prescribe only with recommendation from specialist doctor but may refill without recommendation</th>
<th>May prescribe and refill only with recommendation from specialist doctor</th>
<th>May not prescribe or refill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Aspirin as secondary prevention for individuals diagnosed with ischaemic heart disease</td>
<td>• Statins as secondary prevention</td>
<td>• Oral morphine</td>
<td>• Nicotine replacement therapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Angiotensin-converting enzyme inhibitor</td>
<td>• Insulin</td>
<td>• Antipsychotic agents for psychotic disorders</td>
<td>• Treatment for drug-susceptible TB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Beta-blocker</td>
<td>• Bronchodilators</td>
<td>• Antidepressants for depression and anxiety disorders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Calcium-channel blockers</td>
<td>• Inhaled steroids</td>
<td>• Anxiolytic agents and anticonvulsant medicines for bipolar disorder</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Penicillin as secondary prophylaxis for rheumatic fever and rheumatic heart disease</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Thiazide or thiazide-like diuretic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Metformin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sulfonyl urea</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: answered according to survey respondents and expert consensus.
Follow-up services
Follow-up services are provided in primary care for the tracer conditions investigated aside for depression. The chosen doctor has a predominant role in follow-up care, providing services across conditions aside from cervical cancer, TB and depression. Follow-up services for mental health are currently not provided in primary care.

Table 13. Availability and provision of follow-up services in primary care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conditions</th>
<th>Available in primary care</th>
<th>Health professionals providing service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chosen doctors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypertension</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>×</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ischaemic heart disease</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>×</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type 2 diabetes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>×</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asthma</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>×</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>×</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cancer – breast</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>×</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cancer – cervical</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cancer – colorectal</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>×</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TB</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* health professionals providing service.

Source: answered according to survey respondents and expert consensus.
Design of primary care

Chosen doctors act as a gatekeeper for services offered by specialist doctors and other health professionals. A standard letter is required for the chosen doctor to refer an individual to specialized care. This letter includes the individual's identification information, reason for referral, such as investigation, diagnosis, treatment or reassurance, information related to the illness, such as history, and findings and information related to relevant investigations already undertaken. Key informants, however, note that, in practice, specialist doctors often receive patients without the relevant medical history details and they therefore often undergo repeat tests.

A standard reply letter is required when specialist doctors discharge a person from their care. The letter should include an assessment of the current patient's health problems, the investigations undertaken, the medications prescribed and the next steps in the care of the patient. In practice, key informants signal that reply letters are not consistently used. Discharge planning is required on discharge from hospital. There is not, however, any integrated health and social care plan based on need on discharge from hospital.

For most tracer conditions – breast, cervical and colorectal cancer, asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, TB and latent TB infection – there are no national or subnational guidelines that define care pathways. Cardiovascular diseases and depression have clinical guidelines. The clinical guidelines do not state clearly the role of primary care.

Organization of providers

Primary care services are organized in three main types of practices

Primary care practitioners are organized in three main ways (30).

- Solo practices and group practices (chosen doctor clinics). These are chosen doctor outpatient facilities or chosen doctor teams consisting of chosen doctors for children, adults and/or women. Chosen doctor clinics are organized at the 18 primary health care centres across the country locally referred to as dom zdravlja (Fig. 10). Home health care services are also provided by teams of chosen doctors and nurses. Group practices of chosen doctors are organized in some health centres and allow patients to access services regardless of whether their regular chosen doctor is specifically available.

- Multi-profile practices (support centres). Chosen doctor clinics are supported by multidisciplinary teams of support centres (or guidance clinics). Support centres are organized at the local and regional level and have a mix of generalists and specialists providing support to chosen doctors. Examples of consulting specialists include the following: pulmonary diseases and TB, diagnostics, mental health, children with special needs, health promotion and reproductive health. Consulting specialists can also work in single practices, like is the case for TB specialists.
• Providers of ancillary services (support units). Under the organizational umbrella of primary care centres are also the units for patronage, physical therapy and medical transport. These varied services available are organized into eight regional networks that directly refer between primary care centres and general and specialized hospitals. At the primary care level there are also family planning counselling centres (in 17 primary health care centres) and dialysis units (in the cities of Herceg Novi, Cetinje, Ploć, Rožaje, Berane).

Practice population
Primary care teams operate according to a registered list of people. Individuals are free to choose their primary care provider. However, the choice may be limited owing to a small geographical area or to a specific network of providers. Individuals can freely select their chosen doctor and have the right to change this after six months, although the extent that this occurs in practice was not assessed.

According to regulations, the number of people that may be registered with a chosen doctor varies from 1200 to 2200 (chosen doctors for adults), 1000–2000 (chosen doctors for children) and 5000–8000 (chosen doctors for women: gynaecologists). In 2015, there were 403 primary care teams, of which more than half (276) were chosen doctor practices for adults, nearly one quarter were chosen doctor practices for children (94) and the remaining were chosen doctor practices for women (33) (Table 14).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of chosen doctors</th>
<th>Expected practice population</th>
<th>Number of teams</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chosen doctor for adults</td>
<td>1200–2000</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chosen doctor for children</td>
<td>1000–2000</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chosen doctor for women</td>
<td>5000–8000</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>403</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Institute of Public Health.
System structures

Evidence-informed clinical guidelines are available for cardiovascular diseases, acute ischaemic stroke, arterial hypertension and depression. Referral criteria, however, are not part of the guidelines.

Montenegro has 43 general practitioners (chosen doctors) per 100 000 population, lagging behind the averages of SEEHN countries (52) and European Union countries (80).

Chosen doctors generate about half their revenue through capitation adjusted by geographical location (rural versus urban) and the other half by billing for predefined services.

A health information system is in place in primary care for all health centres and private dental clinics contracted by the Health Insurance Fund and the Department of Emergency Medical Care.

The limited ability of chosen doctors to prescribe certain medicines for chronic conditions and NCDs leads to avoidable referrals to specialized care.

Primary care clinical guidelines

All available guidelines are published on the website of the Ministry of Health (31). In 2012, evidence-informed clinical guidelines were published for the prevention of cardiovascular diseases, acute ischaemic stroke and arterial hypertension. In 2017, an evidence-informed guideline for depression was developed.

The competent authorities have not approved any evidence-informed guideline, protocol or standard for managing (diagnosis and treatment) people with diabetes, cancer, chronic respiratory disease, TB and latent TB infection in primary care. Doctors refer to international recommendations. For example, a guideline for diabetes care is currently being developed. It is being adapted from the Scottish guidelines. Therefore, there are no standard criteria for referring patients from primary care to specialized care. The available guidelines do not contain standard criteria for referrals.

Most of the survey participants (85%) were aware of the existing guidelines for cardiovascular diseases. Only 53% of the respondents, however, knew about the existing guideline on depression. For all other tracer conditions (diabetes, cancer, chronic respiratory disease, TB and latent TB infection), relatively few of the survey respondents could accurately report the existence or not of specific guidelines: 62% for diabetes, TB and latent TB infection, 50% for cancer and 29% for chronic respiratory disease.
Primary care workforce availability

In 2015, 7476 people were employed in public health facilities; about 78% were health practitioners. The primary care workforce represents about 38% of the total health workforce according to national statistics.

Between 2005 and 2015, the number of chosen doctors grew, although not steadily. It grew from 2005 to 2008, followed a roughly U-shaped trend between 2008 and 2013 and grew again from 2014. In 2015, Montenegro had 43 chosen doctors per 100 000 population. Over time, Montenegro lags behind the averages of the SEEHN countries and the European Union member countries with 52 and 80 general practitioners per 100 000 population, respectively (Fig. 11).

The number of nurses follows a similar pattern as the number of chosen doctors. Data on the number of nurses are reported as the total number of nurses and therefore do not indicate the number of nurses working in primary care. This total number of nurses grew slightly between 2005 and 2009, fell between 2010 and 2012, grew again until 2014 and then fell slightly in 2015. In 2015, 3346 nurses were reported (3).

Over time, Montenegro has experienced internal migration of the health workforce from the public sector to the private sector. No statistics are available to confirm this trend nor is there information on the type of health workers leaving the public sector.

The number of health professionals varies across Montenegro’s municipalities. In 2018, the availability of doctors and other health professionals was unequally distributed across municipalities. Access to primary care depends on the geographical location (Table 15).

---

Fig. 11. General practitioners per 100 000 population

Source: European Health for All database [online database] (16).
Table 15. Population coverage for primary care, 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Number of doctors</th>
<th>Number of health professionals with higher and secondary education</th>
<th>Number of inhabitants per doctor in outpatient care</th>
<th>Number of inhabitants per health worker with higher and secondary education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andrijevica</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>941</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bar</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>1097</td>
<td>731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berane</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>945</td>
<td>618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bijelo Polje</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>1044</td>
<td>612</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budva</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>862</td>
<td>407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cetinje</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>808</td>
<td>415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danilovgrad</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>961</td>
<td>571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herceg Novi</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>1277</td>
<td>538</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kolašin</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>822</td>
<td>296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kotor</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1080</td>
<td>709</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mojkovac</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>646</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikšić</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>1244</td>
<td>757</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plav</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>734</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pljevlja</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>949</td>
<td>586</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plužine</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2688</td>
<td>299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Podgorica</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>1233</td>
<td>832</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rožaje</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>796</td>
<td>391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Šavnik</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>842</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tivat</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1066</td>
<td>649</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulcinj</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>876</td>
<td>504</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Žabljak</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1053</td>
<td>526</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>585</strong></td>
<td><strong>1048</strong></td>
<td><strong>1064</strong></td>
<td><strong>594</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Institute for Public Health, Montenegro.
Provider payment mechanisms in primary care
Since 2007, the 18 primary health care centres have been funded through a combination of capitation (roughly 50% of income), fees for services and adjustments for geographical location. Chosen doctors working in rural areas receive higher capitation fees than those working in urban areas. Chosen doctors generate half of their revenue through capitation and the other half by billing for predefined services (32).

Financial incentives in the form of pay for performance have been tested in primary care. In 2013, a World Bank project to improve the financial basis of the health system included introducing pay for performance in primary care. The project called for the extended use of performance pay in primary care but recognized the need for additional mechanisms for accountability and monitoring, citing collective bargaining agreements as an issue among participating doctors (33).

Data capture and information flows
Since 2004, Montenegro has invested in developing an integrated health information system connecting the Health Insurance Fund, primary care, pharmacy activity, dentistry in primary care, general hospitals, the Institute for Emergency Medical Assistance, the Blood Transfusion Institute, the Institute for Public Health and the Agency for Medicines. Individual electronic services were also developed to support the electronic data exchange (eHealth) (4). Fig. 12 illustrates the type of information and their flows.

Each individual has an electronic health record that is accessible to all health professionals, organizations and institutions connected to the information system. Primary care facilities (clinics and health care centres), hospitals and emergency care use the electronic health records. Specialized care and referral from primary and specialized care do not yet use electronic health records (4).

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Fig. 12. Flows in the health information system

Source: adapted from the Health Insurance Fund (2010).
Since 2013, registries for cancer, diabetes, acute coronary syndrome and cerebrovascular disease have been established (4). More comprehensive data from these registries are expected in the coming period. Other registries (14) are for communicable diseases, drug abuse and cardiovascular diseases.

Primary care medicines
In 2018, the positive list of medicines had 1156 medicines available publicly through the Health Insurance Fund. The list has been recently expanded with 114 new medicines that cover a wide range of diseases: hypertension, diabetes, cancer, thrombolytic therapy, new medicines for infectious diseases such as HIV and hepatitis C, medicines for transplantation, autoimmune diseases and mental disorders. Nevertheless, which medicines on the list chosen doctors may prescribe is unclear.

Prescribing data for primary care were not available for analysis. Nevertheless, the importance of prescribing practices in primary care is recognized, especially given antimicrobial resistance. In general, general practitioners have been found in previous studies to issue about 80–90% of all antibiotic prescriptions, making it a high-volume activity (39). Further efforts are needed to improve the available data and understanding of the current context.
Highlights

The current model of primary care and system structures is conducive to referrals to specialized levels of care and avoidable hospitalizations.

According to practitioners’ estimates, ensuring quality primary care services could avoid more than half of all hospitalizations. The following cross-cutting themes were repeatedly signalled as related areas contributing to performance and health outcomes.

NCDs are the leading contributor to the burden of disease, which requires bolstering the disease prevention function of primary care and risk assessment and diagnosis.

NCDs account for an estimated 95% of all deaths in Montenegro. Cardiovascular diseases and cancer cause the largest share of total deaths for both men and women. Specific causes include stroke, ischaemic heart disease and lung cancer. However, risk assessment services, especially for cardiovascular diseases, are among the most pronounced gaps in the services provided in primary care for the tracer conditions assessed (Fig. 13). The absence of clinical guidelines in primary care likely contribute to unnecessary referrals to secondary care for (chronic) conditions for which chosen doctors and nurses could provide treatment.

Fig. 13. Overview of the availability and provision of services by primary care practitioners

According to the services for tracer conditions surveyed. See Annex 1 for full details.

Source: answered according to survey respondents and expert consensus.
Fig. 14 specifically examines services for cardiovascular diseases, including initial prescribing for relevant medications. The cascade further illustrates the lack of risk assessment services in primary care as a critical bottleneck for initially detecting people at risk of hypertension and ischaemic heart disease. The role and scope of primary care in mental health services is also limited.

![Cascade of cardiovascular disease services in primary care](image)

**Fig. 14. Cascade of cardiovascular disease services in primary care**

- **Counselling**
- **Risk assessment**
- **Diagnostics**
- **Confirmation of diagnosis**
- **Prescribing**
- **Follow-up**

- Chosen doctor, nurse and consulting specialist
- Only consulting specialist
- Not available in primary care

Note: according to services for tracer conditions surveyed. See Annex 1 for full details.

Source: answered according to survey respondents and expert consensus.

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**Smoking is a major preventable behavioural risk factor with important potential for improvement**

The risk factors identified are predominantly behavioural, especially smoking. Tobacco-related conditions are an important cause of morbidity and mortality in Montenegro. Bottlenecks identified include gaps in system structures; specifically, the lack of evidence-informed clinical guidelines or protocols hinders services such as delivering brief tobacco interventions, quitline counselling and delivering specialized interventions to treat tobacco dependence. There is also a reported lack of training for health professionals to provide tobacco-cessation services.

According to the health practitioners surveyed, chosen doctors record tobacco-use status in individual medical records, and most offer self-help materials for tobacco cessation. However, interventions beyond counselling are not available in primary care, and in effect, chosen doctors may not prescribe nicotine replacement therapy. Quitline services are also reportedly not available. The quit rate for 6 and 12 months of less than 10% for smokers 15 years and older according to practitioner estimates further underscore this area for both services delivery and system interventions.
The response capacity of chosen doctors is limited to counselling and follow-up

Chosen doctors have a prominent role in providing counselling services and follow-up but are limited in their capacity to provide risk assessment and diagnosis and to confirm the diagnosis for the tracer conditions investigated (Fig. 15). Specialist doctors play a prominent role in diagnosis and confirming diagnosis.

These findings are consistent with reflections from practitioners on the tendency for people to directly access specialist doctors, despite the gatekeeping system. The combined absence of early risk detection and diagnostic tests ultimately compromises the leading role of chosen doctors in providing services for conditions amenable to the quality of primary care services.

Initial prescribing and diagnostic tests by chosen doctors are also limited for some tracer conditions

The scope of practice for chosen doctors for prescribing and diagnostic tests is especially narrow for mental health needs, nicotine replacement therapy, diabetes and respiratory-related medication. This can contribute to otherwise avoidable referrals to higher levels of care.

Fig. 15. Scope of practice of primary care practitioners

According to the services for tracer conditions surveyed. See Annex 1 for full details.
Source: answered according to survey respondents and expert consensus.
**The scope of practice of nurses is limited despite the available workforce**

The study signals that nurses working in primary care (patronage and gynaecological nurses) primarily complete administrative roles with limited or no role in providing services beyond counselling. Survey respondents identified the important yet underutilized role of nurses as a key area for attention. Further, the shortages of chosen doctors in some municipalities require viewing the availability of the existing nursing workforce as a resource to be used. In this regard, investing in the competencies and installing the supportive structures for nurses working in primary care require investment.

**Lack of professional accountability to the population of primary care practices appears to be a symptom of misaligned incentives and information flows**

This study did not investigate in detail the management and quality improvement of primary care services. Nevertheless, in addition to the identified services delivery interventions that could be improved (such as individual risk profiling and population stratification), there appears to be a general absence of professional accountability of primary care practices to their assigned practice population. A lack of financial incentives for this was signalled as a relevant and contributing factor to the current situation. Moreover, although information flows have been improved and continue to advance as this information system develops, the extent to which these data are used is not clear.
Policy recommendations

This section describes opportunities to accelerate the strengthening of primary health care. It sets out policy recommendations for the short term to improve the performance and capacity of primary care. The section also highlights longer-term recommendations to respond to and sustain priority health improvements through system changes. The key strategies highlighted as policy options draw on existing European policy documents and country practices (8,34–36).

Ensuring a competent workforce – the role of chosen doctors

Enhancing the overall response capacity of primary care requires giving the role of chosen doctors utmost priority. Analysing the services provided by chosen doctors signalled the crucial need to increase their role in initial risk detection for effective monitoring and diagnosis of at-risk people across the tracer conditions studied. Putting aside issues of volume and distribution challenges, there is potential to optimize the existing primary care workforce by investing in the competencies of chosen doctors for adults in general for children and for women (gynaecologists). Links to continuing medical education and professional development should be optimized to ensure that chosen doctors are sufficiently trained to confidently identify at-risk people and initiate diagnostic tests accordingly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Short term</th>
<th>Longer term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Optimize the competencies of chosen doctors with short-term capacity-building training focusing on detecting hypertension, detecting and treating people with mental health conditions and diagnosis and prescribing for respiratory diseases Identify and remove potential barriers to participating in continuing medical education programmes, such as insufficient interaction between the trainees and providers, an undifferentiated approach and abstract continuing medical education Introduce a core set of indicators for primary care practices so that chosen doctors can monitor their practice and its performance</td>
<td>Gradually train more chosen doctors in medical school and increase the number of residency positions for family medicine Strengthen the programmes of continuing medical education and development Install mechanisms throughout the system to ensure the analysis and feedback of performance data across the system</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Expanded scope of practice of nurses working in primary care

The pivotal role of nurses in managing chronic conditions such as diabetes and hypertension and in handling risk factors is widely recognized. The increasing gap between the population’s demand for primary care and the number of chosen doctors available to meet that demand will ultimately demand rethinking on the role of nurses, who can act as care managers for people with (multiple) chronic conditions. Doing this will enable chosen doctors to focus on diagnosis and treatment and on leading teams caring for people with complex health-care needs.

To get ahead of this trend, nurses should be trained to confidently triage patients to streamline the delivery of care so that patients with greater needs can be treated in a timely manner by the chosen doctor. Nurses should also have a clearly defined role in the follow-up of patients, an important function for building trust and establishing continuity of care with patients over time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Short term</th>
<th>Longer term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify barriers that currently limit the nurses’ scope of practice, including state laws, outdated insurance reimbursement models and institutional practices and culture</td>
<td>Scale up and transform the educational curriculum of nurses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implement the use of evidence-informed nursing and midwifery guidelines, systematic reviews and recommendations that provide the most reliable available evidence that can be applied to clinical practice</td>
<td>Plan nurses’ workforce to optimize the skill mix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve nurses’ competences with specific capacity-building training</td>
<td>Promote evidence-informed practice and innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduce continual cycles of evaluation of care outcomes</td>
<td>Introduce tools for disseminating evidence-informed practice in nursing and midwifery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invest in the capacity of nurses and guidelines available to effectively triage the in-take of patients and optimally distribute tasks between nurses, chosen doctors and specialists</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Enhance diagnosis capacity in primary care

It is not possible to infer whether the limited diagnosis capacity is caused by a lack of skill of health professionals in primary care and/or limited availability of technologies. Certain regulations do not allow primary care professionals to use diagnostic tests such as Doppler ultrasound for foot vascular status, pulse oximetry, spirometry, etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Short term</th>
<th>Longer term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify and address barriers that impede the enhanced use of diagnostic tests in primary care, such as health regulations, the skill set of chosen doctors and the availability of equipment</td>
<td>Include the use of technology-enabled care as a tool to enable effective chronic disease management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve the competencies of chosen doctors and nurses to use diagnostic tests through capacity-building training</td>
<td>Ensure the consistent availability of technologies and their maintenance across facilities by investing in practice management</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Increase the prescribing capacity in primary care and align with the essential list of medicines

The essential positive medicines list (for which full or partial reimbursement from the insurance company is guaranteed) needs to be better aligned with the medicines prescribed by chosen doctors. This will enable patients to afford the prescribed medicines without incurring financial hardship. These medicines need to be added to the essential positive medicines list.

The electronic information system also reportedly needs to be updated. Currently, chosen doctors cannot search for generics in the system but need to look for brand medicines. A system that recognizes the generic names and counterparts of brand medicines is strongly recommended.

To strengthen the national capacity to respond to NCDs, WHO has designed a minimum set of interventions in the Package of Essential Noncommunicable Disease Interventions (WHO PEN) for primary care. These interventions are delivered by health professionals in primary care – chosen doctors, nurses and other non-physician health workers – to detect, prevent and treat cardiovascular diseases and risk factors (heart disease, stroke and hypertension), diabetes, chronic respiratory diseases (asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) and cancer. If the interventions are effectively integrated into primary care, they can significantly contribute to reducing morbidity and mortality from NCDs and possibly other health conditions. The interventions also contribute to overall reduced health-care costs.

Treating people with such conditions in primary care requires that chosen doctors be able to prescribe certain medicines.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Short term</th>
<th>Longer term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Review the essential positive medicines list and identify medicines that should and can be prescribed in primary care; the prescribing capacity of chosen doctors should include chronic conditions and NCDs that lead to a high burden of morbidity</td>
<td>Adopt the WHO PEN as an instrument that sets a core set of interventions in primary care that require a modest increase in investment but effectively contribute to reducing morbidity, premature mortality and overall costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhance the rationalization of the consumption of medicines with greater use of generics</td>
<td>Update the electronic system to enable search by generics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Invest in risk factor management
The main driver of deaths and disabilities is tobacco. Tobacco leads to several conditions such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, including emphysema and chronic bronchitis, and lung cancer and other types of cancer. According to the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, smoking is directly responsible for almost 90% of deaths from lung cancer and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Short term</th>
<th>Longer term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initiate strong implementation of tobacco</td>
<td>Develop a national tobacco control policy that provides a framework for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>control policies by reviewing and enforcing</td>
<td>coordinating all the main actors and their activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tobacco control policies, legislation and</td>
<td>Match the implementation plans for the tobacco control policy with the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>regulations</td>
<td>available financial and human resources, and monitor and evaluate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase the availability of smoking-cessation</td>
<td>the tobacco control policy over time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>medications in primary care; they should not</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cause financial hardship to users, so (partial)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>compensation by health insurance is required</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ensure a comprehensive package of services for disease prevention, early detection and risk factor management
Based on the current societial and epidemiological context, a comprehensive package of services must be defined for disease prevention, early detection and risk factor management. This involves counselling services on tobacco, physical activity, intake of salt, use of alcohol, body weight, family planning services, healthy lifestyles and psychological counselling for mental disorders. It also entails services for individual risk assessment and stratification such as annual physical examinations, HEEADSSS assessment for adolescents and cardiovascular risk stratification for managing individuals at high risk of heart attack and stroke. If these measures are applied, they could considerably lower hospitalizations from such ACSCs as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, TB and mental health.

The main challenge is the absence of smoking counselling and cessation services in primary health care. There seem to be no specific guidelines, primary care professionals are not trained to provide these services and the payment mechanism does not give incentives to provide these services.

Not only do the services need to be defined to be included in the package but also who or which provider can best fulfil this role. Improving understanding of the underlying causes contributing to the current limited package of preventive services is part of this exercise.

To raise awareness of the guidelines among health professionals, standard approaches can be used that include notifying all registered stakeholders of publications, publishing the guideline through a health ministry newsletter and alerts and a press release on the health ministry website also using social media channels. Other ways to raise awareness are training programmes, conferences, implementation workshops, health ministry field team support and other speaking engagements. Each guideline is different, and activities for raising awareness will vary depending on the type and content of the guideline. Referral criteria – if included in the guidelines – will likely improve the appropriateness of care by enhancing pre-referral investigation and treatment (37).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Short term</th>
<th>Longer term</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify the underlying causes that contribute to the current limited provision of disease prevention services in primary care. Legislation, regulations, skill set of chosen doctors and nurses, lack of incentives, practice variation etc. Prioritize the selection of services and clear division of responsibility among providers in order to target disease prevention, early detection and screening services and risk factor management of priority cardiovascular diseases and cancers. Use tools to raise the awareness of guidelines among health professionals.</td>
<td>Invest in the development of national guidelines, starting with the most prevalent chronic diseases and NCDs, most of which lead to avoidable hospitalizations; the guidelines should clearly indicate a strengthened role of primary care in the prevention and early detection of disease and when a patient should be referred to higher levels of care.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Enhance the health information infrastructure for monitoring and evaluation**

The absence of clear indicators for measuring performance consistently hinders the understanding of system performance. Survey respondents consistently recommended clear and transparent indicators that could be used to measure and evaluate performance across primary care facilities, regular meetings for exchanging data and experiences and a platform to exchange data as important tools to strengthen primary care. A 2017 study (38) also flagged health intelligence as an issue that merits attention.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Short term</th>
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<tr>
<td>Explore in depth the quality-of-care mechanisms currently in use and the actors responsible for their implementation for a full overview of the current system supporting the quality of care. Develop a limited set of indicators to be monitored and evaluated in primary care that covers the identified priority conditions on which to formulate actionable policy recommendations.</td>
<td>Install mechanisms that complement and support a system of data collection, analysis and decision-making for continual learning and performance improvement. Invest in data analysis to set up a system of monitoring and evaluation of data in an integrated health system to identify priority health problems, plan the training of the primary health care workforce, provide a regular supply of essential medicines and formulate actionable policy recommendations. Standardize the information technology system for reporting and monitoring, especially since the number of private providers is increasing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Align incentives
The existing payment scheme could be further developed to account for outcomes, quality and overall performance. It should, for example, provide incentives for responsible prescribing practices in primary care. Incentives should reward the teams that assess the risk of patients with chronic conditions. They could be explicit or extrinsic incentives such as bonuses and cash or other in-kind financial incentives for providers and patients to engage in specific preventive care or health promotion practices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Short term</th>
<th>Longer term</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Account for performance in primary health care by developing a set of indicators to be monitored and evaluated and could be linked to the strategic use of incentives to reward good performance; the initial set should focus on the effective management of chronic conditions and risk factors; the use of incentives should draw on best available evidence that indicates key characteristics for optimally influencing provider performance (e.g. timeliness of incentives, amount) [40]</td>
<td>Encourage performance payments for activities related to better screening and early detection, treatment of people with chronic diseases and NCDs, promoting healthy behaviour (such as healthy diet, regular physical exercise and tobacco cessation) and consider payment incentives to promote the coordination of care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiate supervision from the Health Insurance Fund of primary care professionals’ prescribing behaviour and referrals to higher levels of care linked to performance payments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References


22. Roadmap to monitoring health services delivery in the WHO European Region. Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe; 2017 (Roadmap to monitoring health services delivery in the WHO European Region, accessed 19 July 2019).


Annex 1. Survey results

Note: [workshop] denotes answers for which the response was confirmed through discussions at the consensus workshop in December 2018.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Indicator title</th>
<th>Indicator sub-question</th>
<th>Consensus answer, including the consensus workshop</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Mapping primary health care</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1a</td>
<td>Formally defined scope of practice of primary care professionals</td>
<td>Generalist medical practitioners</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nurses (health professional)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nurses (associate professional)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feldschers or paramedical practitioners</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b</td>
<td>Formally defined scope of practice of primary care professionals</td>
<td>Existing regulation</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2a</td>
<td>Type of primary care health professionals</td>
<td>Existing regulation</td>
<td>Yes, Law on Health Care Protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2b</td>
<td>Type of primary care health professionals – who work in primary care</td>
<td>General practitioner or family medicine doctor</td>
<td>Yes, chosen doctor (for adults in general, for children and for women)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>District therapist</td>
<td>No, not applicable</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paediatrician or district paediatric doctor</td>
<td>Yes, chosen doctor for children</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feldschers</td>
<td>No, not applicable</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Midwife</td>
<td>Yes, gynaecological nurse</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Nurse (health professional or associate professional)</td>
<td>Yes, patronage nurse</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Social worker</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>No, but as consulting doctor</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Narrow specialist</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Specialist doctor</td>
<td>Yes, consulting doctor</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physiotherapist in ambulatory settings</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dietitian or nutritionist</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Occupational therapist</td>
<td>No, but as consulting specialist yes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Speech therapist</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dentist</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Pharmacist</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Public health professional</td>
<td>No, but as consulting doctor yes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Facility-specific specialists</td>
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<tr>
<td>#</td>
<td>Indicator title</td>
<td>Indicator sub-question</td>
<td>Consensus answer, including the consensus workshop</td>
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<tr>
<td>3a</td>
<td>Settings of primary care – who works in primary care facilities?</td>
<td>Existing regulation</td>
<td>Yes, Law on Health Care Protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3b</td>
<td>Settings of primary care – who works in primary care facilities?</td>
<td>Offices of general practitioners – solo practices</td>
<td>Yes, general practitioner (chosen doctor); nurse; paediatrician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ambulatory group practice</td>
<td>yes, general practitioner (chosen doctor); nurse; paediatrician</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Polyclinic/ambulatory multi-profile group practice</td>
<td>Yes, called supporting centres; general practitioner (chosen doctor); nurse; paediatrician; consulting doctors</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nurse and midwife office</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Offices of other specialist doctors</td>
<td>Not applicable (called supporting centres)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dental practices</td>
<td>Yes, dentist (chosen dentist)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Providers of home health-care services</td>
<td>Not applicable [workshop]; patronage nurses provide some services at home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3c</td>
<td>Primary health care and ambulatory services settings</td>
<td>Outpatient departments of hospitals (general hospitals providing outpatient, day care services)</td>
<td>Not applicable [workshop]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Residential long-term care facilities (such as long-term nursing care facilities)</td>
<td>Not applicable [workshop]</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Providers of ancillary services</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Pharmacies, retailers and other providers of medical goods</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Providers of preventive care</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Counselling services in the health benefit package – availability and provision*</td>
<td>Tobacco</td>
<td>Yes, general practitioner [chosen doctor], nurse [workshop]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Physical activity</td>
<td>Yes, general practitioner [chosen doctor], nurse, paediatrician [workshop]</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Intake of salt</td>
<td>Yes, general practitioner [chosen doctor] [workshop]</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Consumption of fruits and vegetables</td>
<td>Yes, general practitioner [chosen doctor] [workshop]</td>
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<td>Use of alcohol</td>
<td>Yes, general practitioner [chosen doctor] [workshop]</td>
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<td>Body weight</td>
<td>Yes, general practitioner [chosen doctor], nurse, paediatrician [workshop]</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Family planning services</td>
<td>Yes, general practitioner [chosen doctor], nurse, supporting specialist [workshop]</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Psychological counselling for mental disorders</td>
<td>Yes, supporting specialist [workshop]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#</td>
<td>Indicator title</td>
<td>Indicator sub-question</td>
<td>Consensus answer, including the consensus workshop</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Management of individual risk assessments/stratification in primary care</td>
<td>Annual physical examination or health evaluation</td>
<td>Yes, general practitioner [chosen doctor], paediatrician [workshop]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cardiovascular disease risk assessment (using WHO/ISH risk charts)</td>
<td>No, not currently available [workshop]</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cardiovascular disease risk stratification for managing individuals at high risk of heart attack and stroke</td>
<td>No, not currently available [workshop]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Detecting hypertension using a risk prediction chart</td>
<td>No, not currently available [workshop]</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Detecting type 2 diabetes using a total risk approach</td>
<td>Yes, chosen doctor [workshop]</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Detecting TB symptoms in at-risk populations</td>
<td>No, not currently available [workshop]</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mental health risk assessment</td>
<td>Yes, supporting specialist [workshop]</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>HEEADSSS assessment for adolescents</td>
<td>No, not currently available [workshop]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Diagnostic examinations in primary care - availability of select services</td>
<td>Dilated fundus examination</td>
<td>Yes, supporting specialist [workshop]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Doppler ultrasound for foot vascular status</td>
<td>No, not currently available [workshop]</td>
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<td>Electrocardiography</td>
<td>Yes, chosen doctor, nurse, supporting specialist</td>
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<td>Peak flow measurement</td>
<td>Yes, supporting specialists [workshop]</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Pulse oximetry</td>
<td>Yes, chosen doctor [workshop]</td>
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<td>Regular ultrasound</td>
<td>Yes, supporting specialist [workshop]</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Sigmoidoscopy</td>
<td>No, not currently available [workshop]</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Spirometry</td>
<td>No, not currently available [workshop]</td>
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<td>X-ray</td>
<td>Yes, supporting specialist [workshop]</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Diagnostic procedures in primary care - who can make the final diagnosis?</td>
<td>Hypertension</td>
<td>Yes, chosen doctor, supporting specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ischaemic heart disease</td>
<td>Yes, supporting specialist [workshop]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Type 2 diabetes</td>
<td>Yes, chosen doctor, supporting specialist [workshop]</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Asthma</td>
<td>Yes, supporting specialist [workshop]</td>
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<td>Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease</td>
<td>Yes, supporting specialist [workshop]</td>
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<td></td>
<td>TB</td>
<td>Yes, supporting specialist [workshop]</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Latent TB infection</td>
<td>Yes, supporting specialist [workshop]</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>Yes, supporting specialist [workshop]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Prescribing authority – ability of general practitioner to prescribe or refill prescriptions for medicine</td>
<td>Statin as secondary prevention for individuals with prior cardiovascular disease (heart attacks, strokes, and peripheral vascular disease)</td>
<td>Can prescribe only with recommendation from specialist doctor but can refill without recommendation [workshop]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Statin as secondary prevention for individuals 40+ years, registered for treatment with type 2 diabetes</td>
<td>Can prescribe only with recommendation from specialist doctor but can refill without recommendation [workshop]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Penicillin as secondary prophylaxis for rheumatic fever and rheumatic heart disease</td>
<td>Can prescribe/refill without recommendation from specialist doctor [workshop]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Aspirin as secondary prevention for individuals diagnosed with Ischaemic heart disease</td>
<td>Can prescribe and refill without recommendation from specialist doctor</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Angiotensin-converting enzyme inhibitors</td>
<td>Can prescribe and refill without recommendation from specialist doctor</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Beta-blocker</td>
<td>Can prescribe and refill without recommendation from specialist doctor</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Calcium-channel blockers (such as amlodipine)</td>
<td>Can prescribe and refill without recommendation from specialist doctor</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Thiazide or thiazide-like diuretic</td>
<td>Can prescribe and refill without recommendation from specialist doctor</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Metformin</td>
<td>Can prescribe and refill without recommendation from specialist doctor</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Insulin</td>
<td>Can prescribe only with recommendation from specialist doctor but can refill without recommendation [workshop]</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sulfonylurea (such as glibenclamide)</td>
<td>Can prescribe and refill without recommendation from specialist doctor</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Bronchodilators (such as oral short-acting beta2 agonists, inhaled short-acting beta2 agonists)</td>
<td>Can prescribe only with recommendation from specialist doctor but can refill without recommendation [workshop]</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Inhaled steroids</td>
<td>Can prescribe only with recommendation from specialist doctor but can refill without recommendation [workshop]</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Nicotine replacement therapy</td>
<td>Not applicable, not currently available [workshop]</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oral morphine</td>
<td>Can prescribe and refill only with recommendation from specialist doctor [workshop]</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Treatment for drug-susceptible TB: Isoniazid, rifampicin, pyrazinamide, ethambutol (first-line treatment: 2HRZE/4HR)</td>
<td>Cannot prescribe and refill</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Antipsychotics for psychotic disorders (chlorpromazine, fluphenazine, haloperidol, risperidone)</td>
<td>Can prescribe and refill only with recommendation from specialist doctor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Antidepressants for depression and anxiety disorders (amitriptyline, fluoxetine)</td>
<td>Can prescribe and refill only with recommendation from specialist doctor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anxiolytics and tranquilizers for anxiety disorders and sleep disorders (diazepam)</td>
<td>Can prescribe and refill only with recommendation from specialist doctor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mood stabilizers and anticonvulsant medicine for bipolar disorder (carbamazepine, lithium carbonate, valproic acid)</td>
<td>Can prescribe and refill only with recommendation from specialist doctor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Follow-up of noncommunicable diseases in primary care – who manages the patients?</td>
<td>Hypertension</td>
<td>Yes, chosen doctor [workshop]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ischaemic heart disease</td>
<td>Yes, chosen doctor [workshop]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Type 2 diabetes</td>
<td>Yes, chosen doctor [workshop]</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asthma</td>
<td>Yes, chosen doctor [workshop]</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease</td>
<td>Yes, chosen doctor [workshop]</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cancer – breast</td>
<td>Yes, chosen doctor [workshop]</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Cancer – cervical</td>
<td>Yes, chosen doctor [workshop]</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cancer – colorectal</td>
<td>Yes, chosen doctor [workshop]</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TB and latent TB Infection (treatment management)</td>
<td>Yes, supporting specialist [workshop]</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>depression</td>
<td>Yes, supporting specialist [workshop]</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>#</td>
<td>Indicator title</td>
<td>Indicator sub-question</td>
<td>Consensus answer, including the consensus workshop</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Services in primary care – who provides the services?</td>
<td>Administration of intravenous fluids or drips</td>
<td>Yes, chosen doctor; nurse; consulting specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Administration of oxygen (mask or tube)</td>
<td>Yes, chosen doctor; nurse; consulting specialist</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cardiopulmonary resuscitation</td>
<td>Yes, chosen doctor; nurse; consulting specialist</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>Foot vibration perception by tuning fork</td>
<td>No, not currently available [workshop]</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Intramuscular or subcutaneous injection</td>
<td>Yes, nurse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Manual ventilation with a bag valve mask resuscitator (Ambu bag)</td>
<td>Yes, chosen doctor, nurse, paediatrician, consulting specialist</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ophthalmoscopy</td>
<td>Yes, consulting specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Postnatal care check of mother</td>
<td>Yes, nurse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Visual acuity examination</td>
<td>Yes, supporting specialist [workshop]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Visual inspection and examination of the feet of people with diabetes for detecting risk factors for ulceration</td>
<td>Yes, consulting specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Services available in primary care to enhance self-management and health literacy</td>
<td>Telephone-based services</td>
<td>Yes, countrywide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Computer-based programmes (such as Internet-based chat rooms, virtual support group)</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Printed resources (such as pictograms, pamphlets, brochures, etc.)</td>
<td>Yes, in some regions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>In-home electronic aids (such as blood pressure cuff, blood glucose device, etc.)</td>
<td>Yes, countrywide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>One-on-one patient education (such as nurse and patient)</td>
<td>Yes, ad hoc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Patients’ school</td>
<td>Yes, ad hoc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Peer support groups</td>
<td>Yes, ad hoc</td>
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<tr>
<td>12a</td>
<td>Clinical guidelines for management of diseases in primary care - existence</td>
<td>Cardiovascular disease</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Diabetes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cancer</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chronic respiratory disease</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TB and latent TB infection</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mental health condition</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#</td>
<td>Indicator title</td>
<td>Indicator sub-question</td>
<td>Consensus answer, including the consensus workshop</td>
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<tr>
<td>12b</td>
<td>Clinical guidelines for managing diseases in primary care – Inclusion of referral guidelines criteria from primary care to higher levels of care</td>
<td>Cardiovascular disease</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Diabetes</td>
<td>Not applicable [workshop]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cancer</td>
<td>Not applicable [workshop]</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chronic respiratory disease</td>
<td>Not applicable [workshop]</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TB</td>
<td>Not applicable [workshop]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mental health conditions</td>
<td>Not applicable [workshop]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13a</td>
<td>Availability of laboratory tests, diagnostic imaging and equipment in primary care</td>
<td>Most predominant facility</td>
<td>Offices of general practitioners – ambulatory group practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13b</td>
<td>Available tests – premises of the most predominant type of facility</td>
<td>Blood glucose measurement</td>
<td>70% or more of facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Oral glucose tolerance test</td>
<td>70% or more of facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>HbA1c, diabetes testing</td>
<td>70% or more of facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Urine test glucose/sugar</td>
<td>70% or more of facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Urine test ketone bodies</td>
<td>70% or more of facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total cholesterol measurement</td>
<td>70% or more of facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Urine strips for albumin assay</td>
<td>70% or more of facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Faecal occult blood test</td>
<td>More than 50% but less than 70% of facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pap smear (cervical cytology)</td>
<td>70% or more of facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>HPV test</td>
<td>Not applicable, not currently available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rapid TB diagnosis using WHO-recommended rapid test such as Xpert MTB/RIF</td>
<td>10-50% of facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rapid streptococcal test for throat swab</td>
<td>10-50% of facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13c</td>
<td>Diagnostic imaging equipment – most predominant type of facility</td>
<td>X-ray</td>
<td>70% or more of facilities</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Electrocardiography</td>
<td>70% or more of facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Regular ultrasound</td>
<td>More than 50% but less than 70% of facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>DOPPLER ultrasound (for foot vascular status)</td>
<td>Not applicable, not currently available [workshop]</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sigmoidoscopy</td>
<td>Not applicable, not currently available [workshop]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Indicator title</td>
<td>Indicator sub-question</td>
<td>Consensus answer, including the consensus workshop</td>
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<tr>
<td>13d</td>
<td>Available equipment – premises of the most predominant type of facility</td>
<td>Bag valve mask for manual resuscitation (such as Ambu bag)</td>
<td>70% or more of facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Blood pressure instruments</td>
<td>70% or more of facilities</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Defibrillator</td>
<td>70% or more of facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Height scale</td>
<td>70% or more of facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ophthalmoscope</td>
<td>More than 50% but less than 70% of facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Peak flow meter or spirometer</td>
<td>More than 50% but less than 70% of facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tuning fork</td>
<td>Not applicable, not currently available [workshop]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Weighing machine</td>
<td>70% or more of facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14a</td>
<td>Availability of laboratory tests, diagnostic imaging and equipment in primary care (second most predominant)</td>
<td>Second most predominant</td>
<td>Ambulatory multi-profile (speciality) group practice / polyclinic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14b</td>
<td>Availability of tests - second most predominant type of facility</td>
<td>Blood glucose measurement</td>
<td>70% or more of facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Oral glucose tolerance test</td>
<td>10–50% of facilities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Rapid streptococcal test for throat swab</td>
<td>Less than 10% of facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14c</td>
<td>Availability of diagnostic imaging – second most predominant type of facility</td>
<td>X-ray</td>
<td>10–50% of facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Electrocardiography</td>
<td>70% or more of facilities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Regular ultrasound</td>
<td>10–50% of facilities</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Doppler ultrasound (for foot vascular status)</td>
<td>not applicable, not currently available [workshop]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sigmoidoscopy</td>
<td>not applicable, not currently available [workshop]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#</td>
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<td>Indicator sub-question</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>14d</td>
<td>Availability of equipment - second most predominant type of facility</td>
<td>Bag valve mask for manual resuscitation (such as Ambu bag)</td>
<td>10-50% of facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>More than 50% but less than 70% of facilities</td>
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<td>Ophthalmoscope</td>
<td>10-50% of facilities</td>
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<td>Peak flow meter/spirometer</td>
<td>10-50% of facilities</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tuning fork</td>
<td>not applicable, not currently available [workshop]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Weighing machine</td>
<td>70% or more of facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Gatekeeping system</td>
<td>General practitioners act as a gatekeeper to services offered by specialist doctors</td>
<td>yes, a general practitioner's referral is compulsory to access most types of specialist care (except in case of emergency) though very often this requirement is bypassed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16a</td>
<td>Referral protocol from primary care to a higher level of care – requirement for a structured referral letter</td>
<td>None specified</td>
<td>Yes, country-wide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16b</td>
<td>Referral protocol from primary care to a higher level of care – components of a referral letter</td>
<td>Individual's identification information</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reason for referral</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Information related to illness</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Information related to relevant investigations already undertaken</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Medication list</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Socio-psychological factors</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>General practitioner's contact details</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17a</td>
<td>Reply protocol from specialist care to primary care</td>
<td>Existence of structured reply letter</td>
<td>Yes, country-wide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17b</td>
<td>Reply protocol from specialist care to primary care – components of reply letter</td>
<td>Assessment of current problem</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Investigation undertaken</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Medication prescribed</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17c</td>
<td>Reply protocol from hospital care to primary care</td>
<td>Existence of discharge letter</td>
<td>Yes, country-wide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17d</td>
<td>Reply protocol form hospital care to primary care – components of discharge letter</td>
<td>Assessment of current problem</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Investigation undertaken</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Medication prescribed</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Next steps in the care of the patient</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>#</td>
<td>Indicator title</td>
<td>Indicator sub-question</td>
<td>Consensus answer, including the consensus workshop</td>
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<tr>
<td>17e</td>
<td>Reply protocol from hospital care to primary care</td>
<td>Discharge planning required</td>
<td>Yes, country-wide</td>
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<tr>
<td>17f</td>
<td>Reply protocol from hospital care to primary care – integrated health and social care plan required</td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Shared care pathways for coordination between levels of care – existence by condition</td>
<td>Cardiovascular diseases</td>
<td>National guidelines exist</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Type 2 diabetes</td>
<td>No guidelines</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cancer – breast</td>
<td>No guidelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cancer – cervical</td>
<td>No guidelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cancer – colorectal</td>
<td>No guidelines</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Asthma</td>
<td>No guidelines</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease</td>
<td>No guidelines</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TB</td>
<td>No guidelines</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Latent TB Infection</td>
<td>No guidelines</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>No guidelines</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>Different access modes offered in primary care – percentage of primary care providers that offer the following modes of care</td>
<td>Individuals can telephone their regular primary care provider or support staff for questions or a consultation</td>
<td>Incomplete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Less than 10% of facilities</td>
<td>Incomplete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Developing shared care plans for people with multiple chronic conditions – percentage of primary care health professionals who engage with relevant specialists</td>
<td></td>
<td>Incomplete</td>
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<tr>
<td>21a</td>
<td>Patients' choice of general practitioner - ability to choose the primary care provider overall</td>
<td>None specified</td>
<td>Yes, the individual is free to choose the provider, but the choice is limited (such as to a small geographical area, or to a specific network of providers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21b</td>
<td>Patients' choice of general practitioner – ability to choose the general practitioner within chosen or assigned provider/practice</td>
<td>None specified</td>
<td>Yes, the individual is free to choose the general practitioner within the chosen or assigned practice</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Patient list used by general practitioners – existence</td>
<td>None specified</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>#</td>
<td>Indicator title</td>
<td>Indicator sub-question</td>
<td>Consensus answer, including the consensus workshop</td>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Coordination within primary care - percentage of general practitioners who have regular meetings with other health professionals</td>
<td>Other general practitioners</td>
<td>Incomplete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>Incomplete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>Incomplete</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dietitian</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pharmacist</td>
<td>Incomplete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Public health professionals</td>
<td>Less than 10% of chosen doctors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Coordination across sectors - percentage of professionals from different sectors who are integrated in a care team to care for people with multiple chronic conditions</td>
<td></td>
<td>Less than 10% of primary care teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Existence of care coordinator - percentage of primary care providers that use a care coordinator to monitor and manage care for people with chronic conditions</td>
<td>Care coordinator</td>
<td>10-50% of practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Case manager</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nurse dispensarization</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
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<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Cooperation with specialist doctors</td>
<td>Specialist doctors visit a primary care practice to provide outpatient consultations/visits normally provided in hospital (replaced specialist care)</td>
<td>Less than 10% of chosen doctors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Specialist doctors visit a primary care practice to provide joint outpatient consultations or visits with general practitioners</td>
<td>Less than 10% of chosen doctors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>General practitioners receive clinical lessons or training from specialist doctors</td>
<td>Less than 10% of chosen doctors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Job satisfaction</td>
<td>None specified</td>
<td>Incidentally, country-wide</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Performance of primary care**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Indicator title</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Consensus answer, including the consensus workshop</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Influenza vaccination coverage</td>
<td>Pregnant women</td>
<td>Less than 10% of pregnant women (note: cultural fears)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Clinical risk groups</td>
<td>10-50% of clinical risk groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Residents of long-term care facilities</td>
<td>70% of residents of long-term care facilities (note: protocol)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>population 65+ years</td>
<td>More than 50% but less than 70% of 65+ years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>HPV vaccination coverage</td>
<td>Coverage</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Education of people with diabetes</td>
<td>Coverage</td>
<td>Incomplete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Counselling services for tobacco cessation</td>
<td>Coverage</td>
<td>More than 50% but less than 70% of smokers, age 15+ years</td>
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<tr>
<td>#</td>
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<tr>
<td>32a</td>
<td>National cancer screening programs targeting the general population for cancer</td>
<td>Cervical cancer screening</td>
<td>10-50% of target female population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32b</td>
<td></td>
<td>Breast cancer screening</td>
<td>more than 50% but less than 70% of target female population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32c</td>
<td></td>
<td>Colon cancer screening</td>
<td>70% or more of target population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Individual risk assessments</td>
<td>Cardiovascular disease risk assessment</td>
<td>not applicable, not in practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Treatment coverage</td>
<td>Controlled blood pressure</td>
<td>more than 50% but less than 70% of hypertensive individuals at health facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Depression treatment coverage</td>
<td>None specified</td>
<td>not applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Hypertension follow-up</td>
<td>Hypertensive individuals aged 18+ years who had a follow-up visit in primary care in the 12-month reference period</td>
<td>incomplete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Diabetes monitoring</td>
<td>Foot examination – people with type 2 diabetes aged 18+ years</td>
<td>10-50% of patients monitored in primary care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Eye examination – people with type 2 diabetes aged 18+ years</td>
<td>Less than 10% patients monitored in primary care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Urine protein test – people with type 2 diabetes aged 18+ years</td>
<td>More than 50% but less than 70% patients monitored in primary care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Blood pressure measurement – people with type 2 diabetes aged 18+ years</td>
<td>70% or more of patients monitored in primary care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Overweight screening – people with type 2 diabetes aged 18+ years</td>
<td>70% or more of patients monitored in primary care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease follow-up (previous 12 months)</td>
<td>General follow-up visit – people with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease 18+ years</td>
<td>More than 50% but less than 70% of patients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lung function measurement – people with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease 18+ years</td>
<td>More than 50% but less than 70% of patients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Postnatal care</td>
<td>Days 7-14 after delivery</td>
<td>70% or more of women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Six weeks after delivery</td>
<td>More than 50% but less than 70% of women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Depression treatment follow-up</td>
<td>None specified</td>
<td>Not applicable, not in practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Incoming clinical information procedures</td>
<td>None specified</td>
<td>Incomplete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Generalist–specialist doctor communication</td>
<td>Receive a report or reply letter back from specialist</td>
<td>More than 50% but less than 70% of chosen doctors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>General practitioner–social worker</td>
<td>Frequency of coordination</td>
<td>Incomplete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Referral feedback to primary care</td>
<td>None specified</td>
<td>Less than 48 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>General practitioner contacts without referral (resolution capacity)</td>
<td>Percentage of total contacts</td>
<td>10-50% of total contacts handled solely by chosen doctors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Correct diagnosis</td>
<td>None specified</td>
<td>Not applicable, not in practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#</td>
<td>Indicator title</td>
<td>Indicator sub-question</td>
<td>Consensus answer, including the consensus workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Prescription of anticoagulating drug with NSAIDs</td>
<td>None specified</td>
<td>Less than 10% of population with a long-term prescription of any anticoagulating drug in combination with an oral NSAID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>Prescription safeguards</td>
<td>None specified</td>
<td>70% or more primary care facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>Medication review</td>
<td>Pharmacists actively medically review prescriptions</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Members of the primary care team (such as primary care practitioner or nurse) actively perform medication reconciliation of patients (such as after hospital discharge)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>Effective detection and management of hypertension</td>
<td>None specified</td>
<td>70% or more of patients registered for hypertensive treatment at primary care facilities whose blood pressure is controlled 6 months after treatment initiation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51a</td>
<td>Effective management of type 2 diabetes</td>
<td>Blood glucose under control at last visit</td>
<td>10-50% of people with type 2 diabetes age 18+ years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51b</td>
<td></td>
<td>People with diabetes with at least one prescription of cholesterol-lowering medication</td>
<td>More than 50% but less than 70% of patients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>Secondary prevention or high-risk control</td>
<td>None specified</td>
<td>10-50% of eligible individuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>Prescription from essential list</td>
<td>None specified</td>
<td>70% or more of drugs prescribed in primary care from essential medicines list</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tobacco-cessation service outputs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Indicator title</th>
<th>Indicator sub-question</th>
<th>Consensus answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>Development of primary care clinical guidelines – tobacco cessation</td>
<td>Delivering brief tobacco interventions</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Quitline counselling</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Delivering specialized tobacco dependence treatment</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>Training for smoking-cessation services</td>
<td>On brief tobacco interventions</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>On providing counselling through quitline</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>On providing specialized tobacco dependence treatment</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>Tobacco-use status in medical records</td>
<td>None specified</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>Services to enhance self-management and health literacy</td>
<td>None specified</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>Tobacco-cessation medications: availability</td>
<td>None specified</td>
<td>Not applicable, medicines not currently available [workshop]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#</td>
<td>Indicator title</td>
<td>Indicator sub-question</td>
<td>Consensus answer, including the consensus workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>Brief advice or brief tobacco interventions quit rate</td>
<td>Quit rate for at least 6 months in your practice</td>
<td>Less than 10% of tobacco users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Quit rate for at least 12 months in your practice</td>
<td>Less than 10% of tobacco users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>Quitline quit rate</td>
<td>Quit rate for at least 6 months</td>
<td>Not applicable, quitline not currently available [workshop]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Quit rate for at least 12 months</td>
<td>Not applicable, quitline not currently available [workshop]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61a</td>
<td>Specialized tobacco dependence treatment quit rate</td>
<td>Quit rate for at least 6 months</td>
<td>Not applicable, treatment not currently available [workshop]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61b</td>
<td></td>
<td>Quit rate for at least 12 months</td>
<td>Not applicable, treatment not currently available [workshop]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62a</td>
<td>Tobacco-cessation medications quit rate</td>
<td>Quit rate for at least 6 months</td>
<td>Not applicable, medication not currently available [workshop]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62b</td>
<td></td>
<td>Quit rate for at least 12 months</td>
<td>Not applicable, medication not currently available [workshop]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>Tobacco-cessation medications safety</td>
<td>None specified</td>
<td>Not applicable, medication not currently available [workshop]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The WHO Regional Office for Europe

The World Health Organization (WHO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations created in 1948 with the primary responsibility for international health matters and public health. The WHO Regional Office for Europe is one of six regional offices throughout the world, each with its own programme geared to the particular health conditions of the countries it serves.

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