
How user-friendly is your healthcare system?

Between May and August 2005, HSCNews International conducted a global survey of health campaigners. The survey enquired about the user-friendliness of the respondents' national healthcare systems. Respondents were asked to comment on six key indicators of system user-friendliness.

Executive Summary

Despite a political willingness in many countries to make patients' needs paramount, and the existence of legislation and policies to promote the cause of healthcare users, this *HSCNews International* survey found that none of the healthcare systems around the world could be regarded as truly user-friendly. Western Europe performed best, with 30-50% of the 108 participants from the region affirming that their country performed well for the six *HSCNews* indicators of user-friendliness. Just behind was Australasia and the Pacific Rim, where national healthcare systems performed at a level similar to those of Eastern Europe. The countries of North and Central America, by contrast, were among the worst performers in the survey. Approval ratings in the region never reached higher than 31%.

Six indicators of system user-friendliness

In May 2005, and then again in July and August 2005, *HSCNews International* conducted an English- and Spanish-language email survey of health campaigning groups across the globe. The survey's 406 respondents were drawn from 38 different countries [for more details on respondents, see the accompanying *Appendix*]. This respondent body specialised in a broad sweep of healthcare issues and diseases [see chart on next page]. Survey participants were asked six questions intended to gauge the extent to which (and how efficiently) their own healthcare systems were tailored to the needs of patients and the public. The six topics in the survey were:

—**Access to a second opinion.** Most healthcare systems stipulate that patients have a right to an alternative medical opinion on their diagnoses and treatment, and that the second opinion should be paid for by the healthcare system. Second opinions ultimately save the healthcare system money, because they can help ensure that diagnosis and treatment are appropriate.

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