

Organization and development of a national pilot program for the prevention and promotion of the health of the elderly (EPIONI): improving health promotion and screening among elderlies



TYPE
STATUS

Implemented pilot action

LAST
UPDATE

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GREECE • NATIONAL
Health promotion & prevention

PROBLEM & OBJECTIVE

PROBLEM Active and healthy ageing emerges as a priority for healthcare systems across Europe, given the number of elderly people residing in EU countries. In order to highlight the importance of active and healthy ageing through the protection of the rights of older people, the improvement of their quality of life and that of their families, the strengthening of autonomous living, social participation, integration and the strengthening of their role at social, economic and cultural level, interoperability and close cooperation of stakeholders can be achieved by networking and national coordination of actions.

OBJECTIVE The National Pilot Program for the Prevention and Promotion of the Health of the Elderly (EPIONI) has a national scope and a pilot character, in order to form the networks of the collaborating stakeholders at national, regional and local level and to consolidate those processes that will ensure its sustainability through the years. EPIONI is addressed to people over the age of 55 in order to achieve the timely detection and diagnosis of health incidents, the formation of healthy attitudes and habits and the strengthening of the role of non-communicable disease management and self-care.

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KEY COMPONENTS / STEPS

- EPIONI is based on three basic steps: (a) informing the elderly and their families in local institutions and community through health promotion actions, (b) evaluation of health conditions using questioners (such as check-lists concerning risk factors and health behaviors), check-up tests and tools (such as capillary glucose levels) and (c) referral system to primary health care units and/or hospitals in order to provide health services needed.
- A fourth step includes community actions, home visits, rehabilitation and follow-up.
- Since 2015, the program focuses on different thematic every year: diabetes (2015), osteoporosis (2016), dementia (2017), cancer of gastrointestinal system (2018), prevention and management of sensory disorders (vision and hearing) (2019) and healthy breathing/management of infections/importance of vaccinations (2020). A network of experts has been involved in the implementation of these programs, led by the Ministry.
- Development of collaborations between institutions and services through local networks with Health, Social Care Units and Civil Society Institutions.
- The stakeholders participating in the implementation of the program are: public (mental) health units, public health authorities, healthcare regions, local and regional governmental structures for elderly, NGOs, Patient Associations, community organizations and associations, Holy Dioceses and other religion bodies, etc
- Next steps include enhancing the design and strengthening of environmentally friendly environments for older people in housing, in the city and in services. Planning includes also other cancer types (such as prostate cancer, breast, skin, etc.) The aim is to create tools (adjusted questionnaires and check-lists) and arise awareness (of screening) in terms of prevention in local and regional level.

KEY CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

- The National Pilot Program for the Prevention and Promotion of the Health of the Elderly (EPIONI) started in 2015 as an initiative of the Ministry of Health (MOH).
- Based on yearly action plans, MOH cooperates with the seven Health Regions in Greece, which can organize actions at regional or local level through the respective health units.
- The National Action Plan for Public Health (NAPH) 2021-2025 is a strategic choice of the ministry of health for making prevention a way of living for all Greek citizens, under which an action plan for cancer will be implemented.

MAIN IMPACTS / ADDED VALUE

- The implementation of EPIONI at national level facilitated the recognition and promotion of the health issues related to elderly people, while shifting the interest from cure and treatment to prevention. The coordination of actions, the implementation of programs with a homogenous identity, templates and orientation, the saving and better use of human resources and the monitoring of outcomes are amongst the added value provided by the implementation of the program.
- Raising public awareness and informing the public about health issues and their psychosocial dimensions.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Covid-19 pandemic has largely affected primary healthcare programs (prevention and health promotion).
- Training of health professionals and life-long learning comprise a necessity for program success.
- Teamwork, interconnection between organizations, coordination at regional and national level and standardization of documents, procedures and guidelines are key factors of success.

REFERENCES & DOCUMENTATION

- Ministry of Health (greek only)

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