

Convention on Health Analysis and Management

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How to choose between freedom of prescription and rules of practice?

Jean-François Bergmann, Jean-Luc Harousseau
Moderator: Jean-François Lemoine

1. Health expenditure controls deemed necessary

Since the 1st of November 2014, doctors must apply for Health Insurance coverage before prescribing Crestor and Ezetrol, two medicines used to control cholesterol. This measure is contested by doctors. It is in clear response to economic concerns and an objective to control the ONDAM (National Objective for Health Insurance Spending). Instead of undertaking sweeping reforms, the Government is defining several money-saving measures. These measures are not simply about reducing expenditure, but about reconsidering products whose cost/effectiveness ratio is deemed inadequate. They are therefore the result of an evaluation by the scientific community.

2. Private practice medicine, a totally free profession

The freedom to prescribe is the fundamental basis of creation for community medicine. General practitioners can practice up to 90 years of age, are not obliged to undergo training, are not forced to opt for computerisation and can see as many patients as they wish. They therefore have a lot of freedom. New doctors may be in favour of prescription guidelines, but decision-makers, of a different generation, take a more conservative position.

3. The interest of the patient *versus* the interest of society?

According to the universal declaration of human rights, freedom consists in doing what you want as long as it does not harm others. In the case of doctors, this may consist in not harming patients. In reality, in a context of economic crisis, doctors must not harm society and the continuity of the French social system. Through their choices, doctors can impact on the financial capability of the system to develop innovation. However, for a long time, medical professionals have not been trained in medical economics.

4. Information on the correct usage of medicines

Health Insurance Companies must bring doctors together if they want information relating to the correct usage of prescriptions and medicines to make it possible to control expenditure. Sharing relevant information may constitute a form of natural regulation.