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Healthcare innovations and improvements in a financially constrained environment.

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The European Council agreed on common values such as good quality universally accessible care in 1996 ¹. However, health expenditure in all EU countries between 1996 and 2013 increased from 7.9% to 9.5% of GDP ². This increase threatens those values.

WE CARE is an EU 7FP consortium tasked to propose a research and development (R&D) roadmap for innovative, cost contained, quality care. The roadmap should not only consider efficacy from clinical trials but also “community effectiveness” including the appropriateness of services provided.

WE CARE invited key players from the pharmaceutical industry, technology sector, academic researchers, health professionals together with patient representatives and politicians to five workshops in 2014 and a Conference in April 2015 in order to identify the principal areas where interventions and policies are required to address the major challenges for healthcare systems. In interactive discussions the participants (28 European countries were represented) identified seven themes (Figure 1):

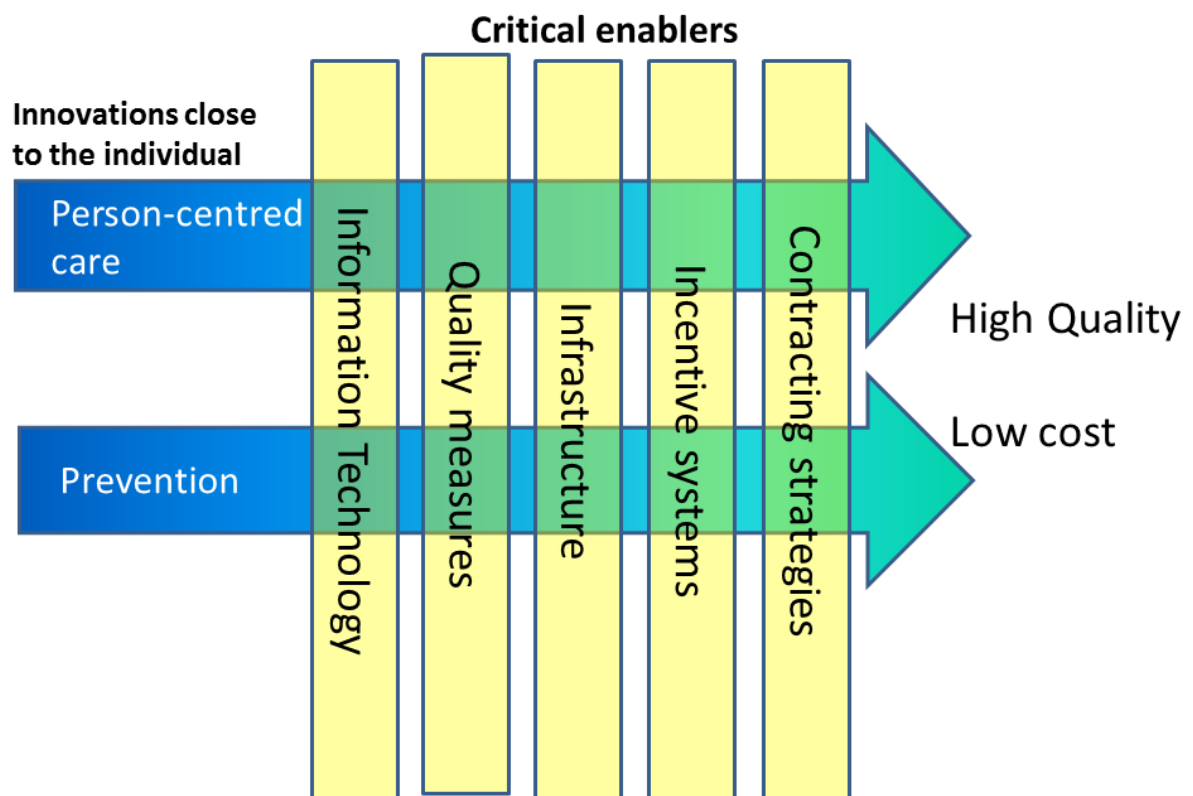
1. Quality measures of healthcare
2. Patient/Person engagement
3. Health promotion and disease prevention
4. Infrastructure, service delivery, and organisational models
5. Information technology to support quality, effectiveness, and efficiency
6. Incentive systems that give new impetus to innovation
7. Contracting strategies that promote efficient and high quality care

If future cost containment and quality of care is to be achieved, the above themes need to be addressed within a **concerted** action across stakeholders and EU member states. This action needs a large investment of probably 100 Million Euro to explore the challenges and be able to produce actions for solutions. This may seem like a large sum but in fact is a very small part of the annual expenditure on health care (less than 0.01% or about 20 cents per EU citizen).

WE CARE proposes to establish several “health care labs” consisting of regions or networks across Europe and prototype completely new ways of conducting health care. The labs should have common features while also differentiating from each other. Short-term results can be presented within the first 5 years, while larger, more comprehensive outcomes and policy propositions could be formulated in a long-term timeframe. The first 3 years will serve as a period of experimentation, iteration, and learning. Each lab will be evaluated the last two years using an area outside the labs, which is comparable in terms of population and health care provision (but without the innovation developed in the lab). Read more at ^{3,4}

Legend Figure 1:

The relationship between the seven themes identified by WE CARE to be important for cost-containment of future healthcare.



References

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