

Healthcare for the elderly:

A need for urgent transformation in the case of Cyprus



Global life expectancy has increased significantly over the past 50 years. This has been partly due to improvement in healthcare, sanitation, and living conditions.

In Cyprus, life expectancy at birth has increased from 77.5 years in 2000 to 82.3 years in 2020; a gain of almost 5 years and it is projected to increase further by 2050 to 83.7 years. At the same time the percentage of the population aged over 65 years is also projected to increase from 16.3% in 2021 to 25% by 2050 and 33% by 2100. This means that the number of people aged 65 and over is expected to almost double from approximately 162,000 in 2021 to around 303,000 in 2050.

This improvement in human longevity carries a price. As the aging population increases, chronic health conditions become more prevalent. Diseases such as cardiovascular disease, arthritis, osteoporosis, dementia, depression, and cancer are all very closely correlated with aging. Although the life expectancy in Cyprus is well above the average for the EU, the life expectancy in good health stops at the age of 63. This means that the average Cypriot spends the last 20 years of their life in bad health. This is in stark contrast to other EU countries such as Sweden where the average time spent in bad health is 10 years. As a result, although citizens aged 65 and over account for 16.3% of the population in Cyprus, according to the European Commission's 2020 "Health at a Glance: Europe" report, they accounted for approximately 36% of the total per capita healthcare expenditure in 2018. The above highlights the fact that the healthcare needs of this age group are often varied and complex, and represent a significant proportion of the healthcare spending.

The increase in the aging population presents both challenges and opportunities for the healthcare system and policymakers, who must work to ensure that healthcare services are tailored to their needs. This is a complex and multidimensional issue given the number and variety of stakeholders involved including the Ministry of Health, the Health Insurance Organization (HIO), the State Health Services Organization, the Social Welfare Services, the Ministry of Interior, private care providers, non-governmental organizations, as well as patient associations. Currently there is clear fragmentation of powers amongst the above mentioned stakeholders. To successfully address the healthcare needs of the growing elderly population and increase the life expectancy in good health these stakeholders need to come together in a coordinated effort to ensure efficient and effective provision of care.

To highlight the existing challenges while also proposing potential solutions of caring for the elderly we will focus on the three topics highlighted in the figure below. Each topic will be addressed in an independent article. The various articles will use a variety of tools and methodologies to identify existing challenges and obstacles of caring for the elderly in the General Health System in Cyprus. We will leverage on information and work carried out by the PwC healthcare team in Cyprus and in other EU territories in transforming the healthcare system, improving aged care, and promoting healthy aging.

1. OECD/European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies (2021), Cyprus: Country Health Profile 2021, State of Health in the EU, OECD Publishing, Paris/European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, Brussels.
2. Lamnissos, D., Giannakou, K. and Jakovljevic, M., 2021. Demographic forecasting of population aging in Greece and Cyprus: one big challenge for the Mediterranean health and social system long-term sustainability. Health Research Policy and Systems, 19, pp.1-8.
3. OECD/European Union (2022), Health at a Glance: Europe 2022: State of Health in the EU Cycle, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/507433b0-en>



Patient-centered care

1

Transitioning towards Patient-centered care

Workforce

2

Addressing existing challenges surrounding the workforce within the healthcare sector

Governance

3

Revising the governance structure to establish a more efficient healthcare system

Authors



Vassilios Vrachimis
Partner
In charge of Health
vassilios.vrachimis@pwc.com



William De Doncker
Senior Associate
Consulting, Advisory
william.de.doncker@pwc.com