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The perception of equity of care by European GPs involved in the quality field

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Context and Aim: Equity, though it is a fundamental dimension of quality of care, is rarely explored. EQuIP, European Society for Quality and Safety in Family Medicine, planned a survey to explore the perception of equity of care by GPs involved in the quality field.

Method: The participants were the national delegates of EquiP and some key informants. The survey was based on a self-administered online questionnaire, constituted of a mix of closed ended and open ended questions. We also interviewed some of the delegates during EquiP regular meetings or by email, in order to go deeper into their answers. We made a qualitative content analysis, with a low level of interpretation in order to stay as close as possible to the informants' experiences.

Results: We got answers from 39 delegates (89%) representing 24 countries, and from 9 key informants. Sources of inequity identified: health insurance status, the ability or not to afford out of pocket costs, GPs time and money constraints, waiting lists to secondary care, language and cultural barriers. The evaluation of equity as a dimension of quality almost never happens at the practice level. Ways identified to improve equity:

- 1) At the system level: universal health care coverage, lower or no copayments, strengthening of primary care, new types of remuneration taking into account the complexity of the patient; incentives for GPs to settle in most deprived areas;
- 2) At the practice level: inter sector cooperation with social workers, community oriented care, training on equity, working with translators, applying protocols, collecting data about social status in the medical records and applying to equity the quality improvement methods.

Conclusion: There is still much work to be done to promote equity as a key dimension of quality in general practice in Europe.