
Survey: More EU Citizens in Need of Long-term Medical Care

19 September 2007 -- A recent EU survey shows that one in four EU citizens need long-term medical treatment and that over a third of such care is required due to high blood pressure - which is caused for by factors linked to diet, exercise, excess weight, obesity, drugs or alcohol.

A Eurobarometer survey on health in the EU, published on September 14, studied among other issues the overall state of Europeans' health and long-term illness as well as the effects of various health problems on EU citizens' daily lives.

The study showed that a considerable majority of respondents (73%) reported a "positive state of general health" and that "only 7% reported poor health". However, more people said they are experiencing long-term health difficulties - 29% in 2006 compared to 24% in 2005.

The results show that one in four EU citizens need long-term medical treatment, the most common reason (36%) for which is high blood pressure (hypertension). Half of the respondents said that they had recently made "lifestyle adjustments" with the aim of reducing their blood pressure. According to health experts, changes in diet and taking regular exercise can help lower hypertension.

High blood pressure is closely followed by muscle, bone and joint problems, which were mentioned by 24% of those undergoing long-term treatment. In addition, around one third (32%) of the respondents said that they had experienced muscle, joint, neck or back pain affecting their daily lives in the week leading up to their interview, the most common being back pain (see EurActiv 05/06/2007).

Once again, according to the European guidelines for the prevention of lower back pain, minor changes in lifestyle, such as taking regular physical exercise, can improve the condition.

Regarding the causes of long-term treatment, diabetes was cited by 15% of the respondents and mental health problems in the form of chronic anxiety and depression by 10%.

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