

PHARMACEUTICAL POLICY-MAKING IN FINLAND

Nordic welfare policy in a market-oriented environment

ABSTRACT

Since the introduction of publicly funded health care, Finland has strived to enable affordable, comprehensive and efficient health care for all its citizens. As the welfare state has come under increasing pressure in an increasingly liberal and market-oriented climate, it has been necessary to adapt and adjust welfare policies accordingly. A number of European and international trade conventions have resulted in a shift in decision-making from a national to an integrated European level. However the main focus and concern with integrated decision-making appears not to be so much with social policy as with the market. This chapter looks at how the conditions for public health policy-making have changed by exploring the system of reimbursing pharmaceutical expenses in Finland.

The Finnish Government has had to find new ways to continue to provide affordable pharmaceutical treatment within the limitations set by the new trade conditions. Finding leverage for price negotiations with the pharmaceutical industry has proved difficult. Currently, leverage for price negotiations is achieved through a number of practices. In this paper I present four methods for cost control: pharmacoeconomic justifications, prolonging entry into higher reimbursement categories, demand for sufficient scientific evidence, and implicit decision-making.

KEYWORDS: Pharmaceutical reimbursements, market liberalism, cost control, public health policy, European integration, Finland