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OPERATION OF HEALTH CARE INSTITUTIONS AFTER THE REFORM. PREMISES FOR CHANGES. INFORMATION ON RESEARCH PROJECT.

The reform of health service is evaluated in the most critical way among four reforms introduced in Poland as of January 1, 1999. According to CBOS's research made at the beginning of July 2001, thus when the new health care system had been already operating for two years, almost 74% of respondents said that the health care system had worked worse than before the reform, whereas only 9% of respondents evaluated the operation of health service as „good”. Also the environment of medical employees does not accept the changes. Such an evaluation is an important premise for discussion on revisions required to improve the system.

Recently, problems of health care system have again become a subject of political debate. However, to make this debate constructive and future decisions accurate, we have to diagnose the existing system, analyse reasons for its inefficiency and review mechanisms generating dissatisfaction both of patients, as well as health service employees. CASE undertook to describe the experience of the last three years of health service operation and to indicate possible directions of changes, under the project entitled „Operation of Health Care Institutions After the Reform. Premises For Changes”.

Work under the project was started in March 2001. It covered all institutions important for the system operation: payers (health care administration units) and establishment bodies (self-governments), service providers (stationary and basic health care units) and service takers (individual and associated in non-profit organisations). An empirical analysis is based on a series of qualitative tests (polls) realised in the said groups. The analysis will result in conclusions concerning the performance of health care functions by particular system actors:

- assurance of service accessibility and quality,
- economic rationality (effectiveness) of decisions related to available resources allocation,
- co-ordination and responsibility functions,
- supervision and control functions.

The research project will be finished in March 2002, and its results will be presented in the conference devoted thereto. The results will be also published.

At present, the research is underway, nevertheless, the existing analyses let us draw the first conclusions related to changes that took place in the health care sector and ways of operation reinforced for the last 3 years, as well as zones arising conflicts. Moreover, the article mentions social issues that are extremely important to evaluate the operation of the health care system and require new regulations, like increasing individual expenses for health care, including medicine costs, problems at the border of public and private area of the health service and corruption.

The operation of the existing health service system in Poland does not satisfy any of parties interested: patients, physicians or politicians. Health service needs changes. According to anticipations of the health care minister, they will be introduced in the beginning of 2003. However, before that, we have to analyse carefully suggested and alternative directions of changes to avoid subsequent failures and costs related thereto. One of basis for the discussion is the system diagnosis prepared by the CASE team of experts.