

**HEALTH ECONOMICS AND PREVENTIVE MEDICINE.  
A NEW BEGINNING FOR ROMANIA**

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**Abstract.** This article is a reaction against the old mentality that disconsidered the economic thinking as a normal and inescapable part of medical activity and of preventive medicine. In order to facilitate this acceptance I offered a new definition of economics as “combining **means** in order to attain a certain **end**”. The most important and often the most ignored means in attaining specific ends is human being itself. Health is a purpose which can not be achieved without a personal involvement. In preventive medicine, the relationship doctor – patient is more important than in curative one. Patient is more valuable in preventive medicine than in therapy and the economic domain in prevention is a primordial one.

**Key-words: health economics, preventive medicine**

**Rezumat.** Acest articol este o reverberație a unei mai vechi insatisfacții în legătură cu locul pe care îl ocupă raționamentele de tip economic în viața cotidiană a fiecăruia dintre noi. Pentru a amplifica interesul pentru o mai bună prezență a raționamentului economic am propus o definiție foarte largă a economicului ca fiind domeniul combinării **mijloacelor** în vederea atingerii unor **scopuri** dorite și propuse/acceptate anterior. Primul și cel mai important mijloc, adesea ignorat sau deliberat omis din motive de orgoliu exacerbant, este ființa umană însăși. Sănătatea este un scop ce nu poate fi atins fără participarea efectivă – în calitate de mijloc – a celui care își propune obținerea acesteia. În medicina preventivă, cooperarea medic-pacient este mult mai importantă decât în cazul medicinei curative. Cu alte cuvinte, pacientul este un mijloc mai valoros în prevenție decât în terapie, iar conținutul economic al medicinei preventive este unul primordial și imposibil de ocolit.

**Cuvinte cheie: economie sanitară, medicină preventivă**

Nowadays, modern medical profession, based especially on medical treatment hospital care and invasive surgery, transformed itself in a postmodern one. It decided to be more open to a set of other *means* that could prevent illness, to prolongue and to improve the quality of life. That meant that the accent of the therapeutical dimension has been moved to the preventive one. Why? Just because: it is more effective, more efficient and more efficacious. In other words, it became more sensitive

to the economic, ethical and political aspects of health care providing.

According to a classical definition of medicine, this discipline and practice is focused on illness and its cure. Therefore, medical work is more therapeutical than a preventive one. In practice, medicine is connected with health at the point where there is a risk to lose good health. Because risk of losing health is a permanent one, medicine is concerned with conditions and determinants of losing health.

This cure/treatment in advance is economically and humanistically motivated. Economists are asking to make a common front with medical doctors against transforming risks of losing health into reality in the context of low socio-economic conditions (poverty, hard working conditions, lack of proper health education etc.). The new postmodern thinking (a trans-disciplinary and holistic one) is melting all these dimensions and has announcing new ways of medicine and health. Health economics is a well established partner of theoretical and especially of preventive medicine in most countries of the world (1,2,3). It is not only applied economics to the field of health care services, but it may be the economic thinking of medical doctors. Maybe these arguments are not clear enough, especially due to the old modern thinking, a materialistic, short term and analytical one, meanwhile the new postmodern thinking is an informational, long term and synthetical one. That is why, in general, all of the practitioners either from preventive medicine, primary healthcare, or hospital services, are interested in having economic arguments for a better funding (4,5). According to the well-known definition, economics is studying the various possibilities of COMBINING MEANS and what are the CONSEQUENCES (6,7,8). We are doing economic activities every moment of our life just because we are combining something all the time. Some of these combinations are out of our control (e.g. combining food with some gastric acid in order to extract

energy and information from the meals) but most of them are conscious and have a clearly established END. So, we are combining some means as: ore, high temperature, time, knowledge and specific technical equipment in order to obtain steel. The *good* proportion of all these combined means is a technical question, but the *best* (optimal) combination is an economic one. If we could substitute some of the combined elements with other ones we are making an economic thinking. When a medical doctor is recommending to his patient not to smoke, to change diet or a certain drug consumption there are exactly similar combinations as obtaining steel. So, this activity is both medical and economic one. ECONOMICS is not only about money, but ABOUT MEANS COMBINED TO OBTAIN A CERTAIN END. This way of doing things also exist in the medical, engineering, pedagogical or agricultural activities.

What is health economics about? It is quite simple to translate the upper definition to the field of health care. So, health economics is COMBINING CERTAIN MEANS to obtain (good, better or best) HEALTH. In order to really contribute to this end in terms of healthy, people are choosing means that are considered to be most appropriate and adequate. Fresh air, nutritive and equilibrated food, good living and working conditions could be sufficient means for maintaining or improving our health status. Healing some incipient illness is as good as food. If people do not comply with these preventive actions, severe illness

#### HEALTH ECONOMICS AND PREVENTIVE MEDICINE

could appear or general health even life could be affected. So, to prevent is better than to treat. It is more cost-effective, i.e. able to obtain the same outcome in terms of health with smaller costs, less pain and within a short time. That is why all over the world the preventive medicine is highly appreciated and even better financed, health economics being considered of a great importance by all the health stakeholders (9).

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