

4. Health and healthcare

Over the last few years, with the spending review in full flow, manoeuvres in economic policy have tried to cut down on expenditure, especially in those sectors that strongly affected overall resources. Of these, healthcare has been the target of repeated attacks and in 2011 in Italy, according to National Health Service data, it soaked up 112,250 million Euros.

At the same time, it was noticed that in Sicily, spending in this sector amounted to 8,732 million Euros, with an overall increase of 2.6% (over 221 million euros) when compared to the previous year. In 2011, expenditure in Sicily represented 24% of that of the whole Mezzogiorno and 7.8% of the national total.

There were 131 hospital structures in Sicily (67 public, 64 private) with a total of 15,369 available beds, representing 7.1% of the national total. In the same period there were 592,525 hospitalized in-patients, for a total of 4,083,555 days in hospital; thus the average length of hospital-stay was 6.9 days. More specifically, state hospitals lost 2 units when compared with the previous year while private hospitals remain stable; with regard to equipment and facilities and the mode of their utilization, there were noticeable differences in the two types of management. The 67 state hospitals possessed 73.8% of the overall number of beds and, at the same time, catered for over 80% of in-patients in Sicily. The average length-of-stay was similar in state and private hospitals, with a figure of 6.9 days, whereas the percentage utilization of available hospital-beds (with reference to 100 available beds) was 79.4% for the former and 54.3% for the latter.

There were 44,193 dependent workers overall in hospitals (84% of whom were working in the state sector). Of these, 24.4% were doctors, 40.1% nursing staff and the remaining persons were employed in other hospital services, including administrative staff. As in the previous year, Sicily, in 2010, could count on 2.1 doctors for every 1,000 inhabitants (in line with national figures) and 3.5 nurses (against 4.5 for the country as a whole).

From 2007 to 2010, the total number of hospitals fell by 5 units, whilst there was a 5.8% fall in the number of hospital-beds available. The number of in-patients also fell considerably by 12.6%, as did the length-of-stay (-4.4%). In the private sector, in particular, four structures closed down, with a 13% reduction in in-patients and a fall of 7% as regards days of hospitalization.

In the same period the state sector underwent a notable reduction in the number of employees (-6.4%) whilst the figures for the private sector increased considerably (+9.7%). In particular, scrutiny by typology of personnel showed that in the state sector there was a -7.3% fall in the number of doctors, a -8.5%

reduction in nursing staff, and -3.2% fall in the number of those employed in other hospital duties. In the private sector, the number of doctors rose by 16.3%, those involved in other functions by 9.6%, whilst the number of nurses remained stable. Lastly, the utilization-rate over the four-year period showed a rising trend both in state institutions (from 78.6% in 2007 to 79.4% in 2010), and private (going from 50.5% to 54.3%).

Obviously the Regional distribution of hospitals depends basically on population size. Palermo (31 institutes overall), Catania (31) and Messina (20) together accounted for almost two thirds of the Regional total, and consequently had a greater flux of in-patients, days of hospitalization and concentration of employees.

At the end of 2010 there had been 7,345 voluntary terminations of pregnancy involving residents in Sicily, which amounted to 6.3% of the national total. Classification by age reveals that 39.5% of voluntary terminations involved women aged 25 to 34 years, and 25.6% those aged 35-44. As regards those under the age of 19, the figure was quite high: 1,093 cases, equivalent to 14.9% of the total, and an increase over the previous years

Over the five-year period in question, recourse to voluntary termination of pregnancy rose by 6.5% overall, with more or less similar increases for all age-groups, with the exception of the first, the very young, which showed an increase of 47.5%. The highest percentages were obviously to be found in the large cities in the Region, i.e. Palermo (1,638 abortions), Catania (1,668) and Messina (895).

In the last year considered there were 47,543 mortalities in Sicily (-2.7 compared to 2009), of which 40.7% were the result of circulatory failures and 26.3% tumours. Data showed that certain types of disease result in death more frequently in men than in women. Among these, throat, bronchial and lung cancer caused 81 out of 100 deaths in men, deaths from circulatory failures 63 out of 100. On the other hand deaths from circulatory failures, from diabetes mellitus and diseases of the nervous system caused most deaths among women.

Glossary

Auxiliary medical personnel: hospital personnel consisting of nursing staff and personnel with rehabilitation duties.

Hospital: any residential structure equipped to take in, and give full-time care to, patients for diagnostic, curative and rehabilitative purposes. Each institute possesses an identifying code (in accordance with the guide-lines of the Ministry for Health -

D.M.6/9/1988). By hospital or clinic one of the following specific typologies is intended:

- Directly managed hospital (transformed into a business enterprise by the bill: art.4, comma 1 of D.L. 502/92);
- Hospital run directly by the local health centre;
- University general hospital (art.39 law 833/78);
- Scientific hospital (art.42 law 833/78);
- Hospital classified or assimilated in accordance with norms (art.1, last comma, law 132/68; art.41 law 833/78);
- Nursing home (provisionally accredited or not);
- Psychiatric hospitals still operating (art.64 law 833/78);
- Private health care institute qualified as local health centre (art.43, comma 2, Law 833/78 and DPCM 29/10/1988);
- Research institute

Infectious diseases: any diseases that can be spread by contact, directly or indirectly, and grouped into five classes:

- Any disease arousing particular concern and thus requiring immediate attention.
- Any disease considered serious because it is very frequent and/or subject to control.
- Any disease requiring specific documentation.
- Any disease which, on being reported by a doctor as a single case, needs to be forwarded to the local health authority only in the event of a local epidemic
- Any infectious and diffusive disease reported to the local health authority and not included in the categories above.

In-patient: hospitalized person, i.e. a person who occupies a bed for a certain period of time (hospital stay) in order to be subjected to appropriate medical-surgical treatment, and for whom a case study has to be compiled.

Utilization-rate per 100 hospital beds: is the ratio between the days of actual hospitalization and the total potential number of days (hospital beds available for the whole survey period) multiplied by 100.

Voluntary termination of pregnancy: an operation by a specialized surgeon that aims to remove the product of conception and associated matter with an interruption of pregnancy. It must take place on the express wishes of the woman, for therapeutic reasons or other reasons where there might be potential damage to the physical or mental health of the woman

Further reading

Publications

Preliminary Estimates for Causes of death in the Italian Regions– Years 2004 - ISTAT
Causes of death – year 2002 - ISTAT
Italian Statistical Yearbook 2013 - ISTAT
Statistical Yearbook for National Health Service – 2012 – Ministry of Health
Annual Report 2012 – INAIL

Internet

<http://www.istat.it>

Health for All – Italy – Territorial informational system for Healthcare
Regional Socio-sanitary Indicators
Resident Population Mortality-rate tables - 2006
Hospital structures and activities – 2010
Voluntary interruption of pregnancy in Italy – 2010
Hospital discharges in Italy – 2001-2002
Causes of death – 2009
Italian Statistical Yearbook 2013 – Chapter 3: “Health and Healthcare”

www.disabilitaincifre.it

Statistical information system for disabilities

www.iss.it

Reported cases of acute viral hepatitis
Surveillance systems of bacterial meningitis
National AIDS register
Register of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease and correlated syndromes

www.simi.iss.it

Infectious disease computerized system

www.ministerosalute.it

Healthcare geographical atlas – 2004
National health-care plan – 2011-2013
National plan for alcohol and health 2012
Plan of action for women’s health
Drug-use and public service activities for drug-addiction (SERT)
Report on the state of health of the nation – 2007-2008
Hospitalization, diagnoses, operations carried out and length of hospital-stay of all hospitals
Epidemiological data research
Informational system for transplants

Certificate for child-birth assistance (CeDAP). Analysis of giving birth – 2007

www.simi.iss.it/bollettini.htm

Higher Health Institute AIDS Register

www.starnet.unioncamere.it

(thematic areas – healthcare – analysis and data)

Use of medicines in Italy

Alcohol and Young People Project