Institute of General Practice

Chair of General Practice

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Research Focus
• Preventing overdiagnosis in primary care – the network Pro Pricare
• Pilot project MVZ Eckental – Clinical quality control
• Competence development in general practice trainees and medical students
• Medical decision-making in general practices
• Classification of diseases in primary care

Structure of the Institute

Institute of General Practice:
Professorships: 1
Personnel: 8
• Doctors (of Medicine): 3
• Scientists: 3 (thereof funded externally: 3)
• Graduate students: 20
Medical care center (MVZ) Eckental:
• Doctors (of Medicine): 5
• Medical assistants: 6

Clinical focus areas
Primary care in MVZ Eckental

Research

Our area of investigation is health services research. In our projects, we analyze use, risks, and benefits of diagnostic and therapeutic methods as well as health services in “everyday life” connecting our research closely to real healthcare. Our main area of interest is primary care and health care delivered in genera practices. Our research focuses on overdiagnosis in primary care and on competence development.

Preventing overdiagnosis in primary care – the network Pro Pricare

Preventing overdiagnosis is primary care – the network Pro Pricare. Pro Pricare is a consortium of pro-Primary Care. Pro Pricare will focus on implementing feasible tools to identify areas of overtreatment and to prevent medical overuse. Pro Pricare is a consortium of academic institutions of FAU and UK Erlangen. A partner in ambulatory care will be the research-based practice network “Forschungspraxen Franken” comprising of four practice networks located in rural and urban areas of Franconia (a region in Northern Bavaria). Also, the GWQ ServicePlus AG representing company health insurance funds (Betriebskrankenkassen) and the Bavarian Association of Statutory Health Insurance Physicians (Kassenärztliche Vereinigung Bayerns, KVB) are involved. The network will receive funding of 2.1 million Euro by BMBF.

It is mostly elderly people who experience a growing amount of health problems and disabilities. Medicine’s reaction to this is an increasing amount of medical procedures, leading into a situation where medical intervention might do more harm than good. This requires a rational choice of the most effective interventions. However, medical overuse affects not only old patients. The lack of clear distinction between risk factors, pre-disease and disease in combination with advancing medical technology, entrepreneurship and a cultural focus on health all carries the risk of “disease inflation”. To address these problems, three projects will be conducted:

1. ICF: International Classification of Functioning, Development of an ICF core set to place the person as the watershed between necessary and unnecessary medicine into the center of medical thinking.

2. ICE: Ideas, Concerns, Expectations. Can patient-centered communication reduce the number of medical interventions in self-limited illness (here: acute low back pain)?

3. ACE: Adverse Cascade Effects. Understanding and describing the starting points and drivers of detrimental clinical pathways ending with unnecessary medical interventions (here: for thyroid disorders).

Pilot project MVZ Eckental – Clinical quality control

Young general practitioners (GP) prefer flexible working hours as well as team work, reconciling family and work and work-life-balance. Practice networks, as for example MVZ, already provide the required structural conditions: However, working conditions and procedures need to be adapted. Comprehensive information on patients’ diagnostic and therapeutic treatment must be accessible continuously for all team members. Until now, information on treatment process was insufficiently documented. Furthermore, therapeutic concepts were not organized for team work. The aim of our project is to create a comprehensive and detailed documentation. Therefore, we use routine data derived from electronic health records and added by additional information. Furthermore, we will develop concepts for inter-professional work in patient care, in particular collaboration between GP and specialists.

Funding: Bavarian State Ministry of Health and Care

Competence development in general practice trainees and medical students

The reasons for general practice care being threatened by an acute shortage of GP are manifold. To meet this challenge, different approaches for solutions need to be developed and tested. In our project, we want to examine whether financial and ideological support of medical students during their one-year internship and working in a GP in rural areas would help to make the profession general practitioner more attractive. A qualitative cohort-study was conducted. Medical students were interviewed in order to explore career choices of medical students and to gather more information about their perception and rating of a GP’s work. We also wanted to know whether funding initiatives will aim at successfully reducing the shortage of GP.

Funding: Bavarian State Ministry of Health and Care, Bavarian Association of General Practitioners, Oberfranken Offensiv e.V.
Medical decision-making in general practices

The main workload of GP compromises illnesses with vague symptoms, presented at early stages and in an undifferentiated way. To deal with diagnostic uncertainty is hence a major challenge for a GP. Considering these facts, we want to investigate factors influencing medical decision-making in primary care. A series of research projects was conducted to examine the effect of tolerance of ambiguity, the importance of different symptoms in diagnostic and therapeutic processes, and how scientific evidence is taken into account. Routine data provided by the KVB were analyzed.

Classification of diseases on primary care

Since 2006, Prof. Dr. T. Kühlein has been a member of the WONCA International Classification Committee (WICCC). He also became a member of the Executive Committee in 2012. The mission of WICCC is to maintain and further develop classifications for primary care as for example the International Classification of Primary Care (ICPC). Recently, Prof. Dr. T. Kühlein was appointed to the WHO-FIC network, a group of international experts in the field of classification. WHO-FIC is part of the World Health Organization (WHO). There are cooperations with Radboud University in Nijmegen (The Netherlands) and Ghent University (Belgium).

Teaching

The Institute’s teaching activities entail lectures, internships and various elective courses within the medical curriculum. Two interprofessional courses can be highlighted: The elective course “Arzt und Unternehmer” and the “Anamnese- gruppen an der Medizinischen Fakultät der FAU”.

The elective course “Arzt und Unternehmer” is based on a cooperation with the KVB, the Verein Aktivsenioren Bayern e.V. and the Deutsche Apotheker- und Ärztebank. Within the course students learn how to develop a business plan for a practice aiming at reducing students’ economic fears to establish an own practice in the future.

Furthermore the Institute of General Practice supports a students’ initiative called „Anamnese- gruppen an der Medizinischen Fakultät der FAU”. Students learn to consult with emphasis on a bio-psycho-social model, patient-centered communication, handling of subjective perceptions of patients, reflection on communication skills and interprofessional teamwork. Students from all medical degree programs (medicine, dentistry, logopedics, psychology) are invited.

This project was awarded the prize of the Deutsche Balint-Gesellschaft e.V. (DBG) in 2016. We also provide supervision of Bachelor’s and Master’s theses as well as MD theses.

Selected Publications

Kühlein T, Madlo-Thiess F, Warnbach V, Schaffer S. 10 Years of Quality Management: Perception and Importance from GPs’ Point of View. Gesundheitswesen. 2016, Oct 25

International Cooperations

Prof. Dr. J. de Maeseneer, Department of Family Medicine and Primary Health Care, Ghent University, Ghent: Belgium
Dr. L. Heath, London: UK
Prof. Dr. G. Stucki, Department of Health Sciences and Health Policy, University of Lucerne, Lucerne: Switzerland