



Access to and continuity of primary medical care of different providers as perceived by the Finnish population.

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Abstract: To study people's views on the accessibility and continuity of primary medical care provided by different providers: a public primary healthcare centre (PPHC), occupational healthcare (OHC), and a private practice (PP). A nationwide population-based questionnaire study. Finland. A total of 6437 (from a sample of 10,000) Finns aged 15-74 years. Period of time (in days) to get an appointment with any physician was assessed via a single structured question. Accessibility and continuity were evaluated with a five-category Likert scale. Values 4-5 were regarded as good. Altogether 72% had found that they could obtain an appointment with a physician within three days, while 6% had to wait more than two weeks. Older subjects and subjects with chronic diseases perceived waiting times as longer more often than younger subjects and those without chronic diseases. The proportion of subjects who perceived access to care to be good was 35% in a PPHC, 68% in OHC, and 78% in a PP. The proportion of subjects who were able to get successive appointments with the same doctor was 45% in a PPHC, 68% in OHC, and 81% in a PP. A personal doctor system was related to good continuity and access in a PPHC. Access to and continuity of care in Finland are suboptimal for people suffering from chronic diseases. The core features of good primary healthcare are still not available within the medical care provided by public health centres.

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