

## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of the present study was to identify factors associated with the utilization of healthcare services in Greece.

Data was obtained through the "Health and Healthcare Systems Responsiveness Study" (HHSRS), a survey organized by the World Health Organization and locally executed by the National School of Public Health. The data collection period extended from December 2000 to May 2001. A random national sample of 5000 prospective participants was identified. Selection of the sample was based in the national phone directory; a random starting point was selected and a fixed interval was used thereafter. Participants were mailed two self-administered questionnaires. The first was designed to assess the general health status of the Greek population and the second was designed to assess the responsiveness of the national healthcare system. Both research instruments contained questions related to utilization, as measured by the frequency of annual medical visits to family physicians, specialized doctors, outpatient hospital departments, pharmacies, dentists, physical therapists and hospitals in general.

Data was computed and analyzed using mainly logistic regression (studying predictors of utilization) and Poisson regression (for assessing factors affecting the number of medical visits).

The response rate was 36,4%, as 1819 informative, filled questionnaires were received. Predictors of utilization of healthcare services included sex, age, health status, income, educational level and having insurance coverage. Secondary or tertiary care was associated with the region of origin of the respondents, their educational level and insurance coverage.

The expected effects of three well-defined factors, namely an individual's health status, age and gender, to the utilization of healthcare services were confirmed in the present study. However, our study also identified "income" as an important predictor of medical utilization; higher income is associated with increased utilization, through the financial ability to access private services. Another major

finding was the downward trend concerning the impact of geographical barriers to the utilization of healthcare services in Greece.