

Replacing illusions with explicit target links after 30 years in Austria

Temml C 1, Piribauer F 2, Schmid D 3, Maier M 4, Klima G 5, Pueringer U 6, Gray JAM 7

1. Preventive Medicine Center Vienna, Austria; 2. Center for applied Epidemiology and Health Policy Vienna; 3. AGES Vienna; 4. Public Health Center – Medical Univ. Vienna; 5. Styrian Sick fund, Graz; 6. VAEB – Prevention Center, Graz; 7. National Screening Committee, UK

1 Background

30 years of nationwide practice in Austria....

From 1975 – 2004 a total of 13 million annual medical check-up at GPs and primary care specialists were reimbursed.

Standardised but unspecific interventions...

Since 1974 fill-in forms regulate the minimal content of the free of charge annual check up in Austria.

Effectiveness of services?

Preventive activities in the Austrian mass screening programme should be done for explicit purposes – preventable diseases ¹.

Are the optimal manoeuvres performed during the periodic health examination to reduce the burden of those diseases?

Target screening links (TSLs)...

Target disease – screening manoeuvre links (TSLs) have been published in evidence based guidelines in the UK, USA, Canada.

have they been missing in Austria ?

2 Aim

To identify if any evidence on TSLs, the manoeuvre-prevention target links, - the **"why I am doing this"** - , has been published for the Austrian check-ups within the last 40 years.

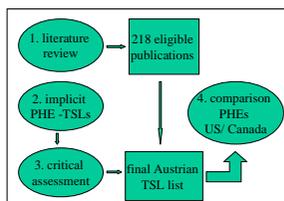
To establish explicit evidence for such links even if they existed implicitly only.

To contrast the (implicit) targets of the annual check-ups, our periodic health examination (PHE), to the targets and manoeuvres (TSLs) published by the Canadian and US Preventive Services Task Forces ^{2,3}.

3 Method

To identify and publish TSLs for the new Austrian periodic health examination (PHE) we

- conducted a systematic literature review, including hand-searches and interviews with local experts,
- elicited implicit assumptions about the target disease-screening manoeuvre-links (TSL) among local PHE experts in personal interviews. Two of us have supervised more than 100.000 Austrian PHEs,
- critically assessed these implicit assumptions (TSL) with representative physician panels, which were involved in the Austrian PHE reform project between 2003 and 2004.
- compared the final list of the assumed target diseases with the manoeuvres and target diseases in the PHEs recommended by the Canadian and United States Preventive Services Task Forces. (International comparison)



Identification of a final list of Austrian target disease – screening links (TSL) for the new Austrian periodic health examination (PHE) in relation to the international evidence.

4 Results

- Literature review: Among 218 eligible medical publications there was none reporting on the TSLs for the Austrian PHE. In the Austrian legal documents we found 12 target conditions and 149 screening manoeuvres for the PHE, but no link between them.
- Implicit PHE - TSL assumptions: 80 target diseases could be found, and were associated to the 149 items (manoeuvres) in the PHE fill in forms. For the first time ever, the content of the old fill in forms was published outside Austria in a report in English language (see EUPHA 2005 abstract by W. Devillé from NIVEL)



Page 56 from the first ever English report, commissioned by one of the authors, on the content of the old Austrian annual periodic health examination.

- Critical assessment of TSL assumptions: The representatives of the Austrian Medical Chamber (Österreichische Ärztekammer), and the supreme sanitary advisory board of the federal Ministry of Health, did not claim to enlarge the final list of 80 target diseases.

Thus detecting and preventing those 80 conditions (diseases) were thought to be the aim of 30 years of PHE practice in Austria.

11 Summary and Overview of implicit targets in Austrian HGS forms

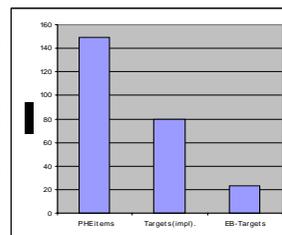
Target	Screening manoeuvre	Screening manoeuvre (in German)	Screening manoeuvre (in English)
1. Bluthochdruck	Blutdruckmessung	Blutdruckmessung	Blood pressure measurement
2. Diabetes mellitus	Blutzuckerbestimmung	Blutzuckerbestimmung	Blood sugar determination
3. Herz-Kreislauferkrankungen	Herz-Kreislauferkrankungen	Herz-Kreislauferkrankungen	Heart and circulatory diseases
4. Lungenerkrankungen	Lungenerkrankungen	Lungenerkrankungen	Lung diseases
5. Kreislauferkrankungen	Kreislauferkrankungen	Kreislauferkrankungen	Circulatory diseases
6. Bluthochdruck	Blutdruckmessung	Blutdruckmessung	Blood pressure measurement
7. Diabetes mellitus	Blutzuckerbestimmung	Blutzuckerbestimmung	Blood sugar determination
8. Herz-Kreislauferkrankungen	Herz-Kreislauferkrankungen	Herz-Kreislauferkrankungen	Heart and circulatory diseases
9. Lungenerkrankungen	Lungenerkrankungen	Lungenerkrankungen	Lung diseases
10. Kreislauferkrankungen	Kreislauferkrankungen	Kreislauferkrankungen	Circulatory diseases
11. Bluthochdruck	Blutdruckmessung	Blutdruckmessung	Blood pressure measurement
12. Diabetes mellitus	Blutzuckerbestimmung	Blutzuckerbestimmung	Blood sugar determination
13. Herz-Kreislauferkrankungen	Herz-Kreislauferkrankungen	Herz-Kreislauferkrankungen	Heart and circulatory diseases
14. Lungenerkrankungen	Lungenerkrankungen	Lungenerkrankungen	Lung diseases
15. Kreislauferkrankungen	Kreislauferkrankungen	Kreislauferkrankungen	Circulatory diseases

Identification of a final list of Austrian target disease – screening links (TSL) for the new Austrian periodic health examination (PHE) in relation to the international evidence.

Example of the beginning of the list of target conditions presented in the critical assessment step (see Method).

- The international comparison resulted in 23 of the 80 conditions (disorders, diseases of the final list) found to be discussed by the Canadian and United States Preventive Services Task Forces.

For 149 items in the fill-in forms for the Austrian PHE 80 implicit prevention target conditions were attributed. Only 23 of those were addressed in the international PHE recommendations (evidence based targets: EB-Targets).



5 Conclusions

The majority of the implicit target diseases (57 of 80 conditions) of the Austrian PHE programme are not considered to be included or even discussed in internationally acknowledged, evidence based PHE programmes.

A substantial number of the Austrian screening manoeuvres are not based on scientific evidence and are therefore candidates for removal within the reform of the Austrian PHE programme.

Although the reformed programme, which starts just now (Nov. 2005) still contains some manoeuvres with evidence of no or unclear health benefit to the population.

However the TSLs are now explicit and available to the public via the internet.

The great majority of new manoeuvres are now supported by international evidence, and could be evaluated in their effectiveness in the decades to come in Austria.



The first ever published evidence based guideline ("Wissenschaftliche Grundlagen") for the new Austrian Periodic Health Examination ("Vorsorgeuntersuchung Neu")

6 References (Literature)

- Piribauer F, Schmid D, Herkner H, Gray JAM, Pieber TR, Haidinger G et al. To screen or not to screen: that is the question - Screening Programme auf den Prüfstand! - Evidence Based Medicine Kriterien zur Beurteilung von Screening Programmen. Mitteilungen der Sanitätsverwaltung - Offizielles Organ für das öffentliche Gesundheitswesen in Österreich 105[9], 8-12. 2004. Ref Type: Journal (Full)
- USPSTF. Guide to Clinical Preventive Services. <http://www.ahrq.gov/> [3]. 2004. 5-4-2004. Ref Type: Electronic Citation
- Canadian Task Force on the Periodic Health Examination. The Canadian Guide to Clinical Preventive Health Care. 1 ed. Ottawa: Canadian Government Publishing, 1994.

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more -> www.zaeg.at/screening