Joint Working Team for UHC: Stories from the field.

Republic of Moldova: Improving access to medicines for UHC

The Government of Moldova is committed to making progress towards universal health coverage (UHC). Access to affordable medicines and other health products is a good indicator of progress towards this goal. It is vital to be able to measure and monitor the population’s access to medicines, and the Government has worked with WHO in order to do so.

The Republic of Moldova is working towards achieving UHC, making quality health services accessible to the whole population without financial hardship. But how will Moldova measure progress towards UHC? A new mobile application developed by WHO helps countries to collect and analyze data on medicine prices and availability. This information enables policymakers to identify strategies to improve availability and reduce prices and to assess the impact of health reforms.

Ensuring affordable access to medicines and health products for everyone is central to UHC. One of the biggest barriers to affordable access to medicines and health products is that people have to pay for them out-of-pocket. New evidence from the WHO Regional Office for Europe shows how out-of-pocket payments lead to financial hardship for over 15% of households in Moldova – especially the poorest households – and that financial hardship is largely driven by out-of-pocket payments for outpatient medicines. This level of financial hardship reflects Moldova’s heavy reliance on out-of-pocket payments to finance the health system – out-of-pocket payments accounted for 46% of current spending on health in 2016 – as well as coverage policy and other factors.

Financial hardship and unmet need are particularly problematic for people in rural areas. A WHO study on financial protection in the Republic of Moldova finds that over 70% of households with catastrophic health spending live in rural areas. Rural populations also face geographical barriers to access due to a lack of services in their locality.

When I or my family is ill, I have to go to the district center and buy medicines in a pharmacy. Sometimes, I get a special prescription from family doctor and then I pay very little for medicines. But usually, I do not have this prescription and I have to cover the full cost of medicines. As I am the only working member of my family, the cost of medication is a high burden for our household.” Said Alexandru Zaporojan, farmer, Zaicana village, Criuleni district.

Good quality data available in good time are essential in improving policies and practices related to medicines access.

Larisa Amer, Pharmacist, University pharmacy.

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Moldova is among the first countries in the European Region to pilot this new mobile application – MedMon – designed by WHO to help countries monitor the availability and price of medicines.

**WHY IT MATTERS**

Access to affordable medicines and other health products is a good indicator of progress towards UHC. It is vital to be able to measure and monitor the population’s access to medicines.

**EXPECTED IMPACT**

Good quality data available in good time will improve policies, practices and focused interventions related to medicines access and health products, and support progress towards UHC.

**IN PRACTICE**

The Government of Moldova is applying the new WHO MedMon application in 60 settings. Local experts with support from all levels of WHO analyze the data to provide evidence for future policy development.

I am happy that I could take part in the pilot project and contribute to the better monitoring of medicines availability and prices in my country. This is very important from the perspective of patients’ access to treatment and essential medicines. The mobile tool was user friendly and allowed us to collect a lot of data in a short time.” Said Cristina Tverdohleb, Data Collector.

It was very exciting to work on this project. I found this process beneficial for the national system. I hope that Moldovan health authorities will continue to use this tool for regular price monitoring at different levels of the health system.” Said Dr Zinaida Bevzerhni, Health systems officer, WHO Country Office, Republic of Moldova.