

The use of ICPC in Portugal – status update 2013

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ICPC is the official classification for primary care in the Portuguese National Health Service. Almost every family doctor has access to an EHR that uses ICPC to classify reasons for encounter, problems and process. EHRs must use ICPC coding to be authorized for use in primary care. Hospital referrals are also coded with ICPC. Private practices and insurance companies (outside the NHS) do not use ICPC, but represent a very small fraction of primary care in Portugal.

ICPC is used by the Ministry of Health to monitor productivity in primary care and measure quality and performance indicators. The proportion of primary care visits in which at least one ICPC-2 problem was recorded varied between 75 (in the Algarve region) and 91% (in the North region) of visits.

Most, but not all, family medicine residents receive a short (<1 day) training on ICPC use in clinical practice, but many older doctors still struggle with the classification. No new studies on classification accuracy have been published.

The Portuguese Association of General and Family Medicine paid for the introduction of ICPC-2 version 4.2 in the CLAM tool, making further upgrades easier.

A research paper on the use of ICPC to classify reasons for encounter was published: Barreiro D.Santiago L. Motivos de consulta em Medicina Geral e Familiar no distrito de Coimbra no ano de 2010. Revista Portuguesa de Medicina Geral e Familiar. 2013; 29(4):236-43 <http://www.rpmgf.pt/ojs/index.php?journal=rpmgf&page=article&op=view&path%5B%5D=11108>