Waiting times for cataract surgery in ten European countries: an analysis using data from the SHARE survey

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AIMS: To assess waiting times for cataract surgery and their acceptance in European countries, and to find explanatory, country-specific health indicators.

METHODS: Using data from the survey of health, ageing and retirement in Europe (SHARE), waiting times for cataract surgery of 245 respondents in ten countries were analysed with the help of linear regression. The influence of four country specific health indicators on waiting times was studied by multiple linear regression. The influence of waiting time and country on the wish to have surgery performed earlier was determined through logistic regression. Additional information was obtained for each country from opinion leaders in the field of cataract surgery.

RESULTS: Waiting times differed significantly (p<0.001) between the ten analysed European countries. The length of wait was significantly influenced by the total expenditure on health (p<0.01) but not by the other country specific health indicators. The wish to have surgery performed earlier was determined by the length of wait (p<0.001) but not by the country where surgery was performed.

CONCLUSION: The length of wait is influenced by the total expenditure on health, but not by the rate of public expenditure on health, by the physician density or by the acute bed density. The wish to have surgery performed earlier depends on the length of wait for surgery and is not influenced by the country.