

Incentives

The aim of the IAAS is to promote the development and growth of high quality ambulatory surgery worldwide. To this end, it encourages an international exchange of ideas and stimulates programmes of education, research and audit.

In this edition of AMBULATORY SURGERY, Paulo Lemos MD presents an audit of the financial valuation of ambulatory surgery from a truly international viewpoint. Eighteen out of 29 member countries of IAAS answered the questionnaire. Dr. Lemos obtained data on the countries' relative wealth by GDP and their healthcare model, and correlated that with healthcare costs for personnel and drugs, national costs of labour, and the payments for a list of surgical procedures comparing the inpatient and ambulatory settings. Dr. Lemos added a creative comparison of the costs of daily living by

comparing the costs of commonly purchased ordinary items, the local newspaper, underground ticket and a burger. These data from four continents showed substantial financial differences and heterogeneity, with some indicators not tracking with others.

These data are interesting and important to be sure. There is however one point that rises above the rest. The countries that provide strong financial incentives achieve a high percentage of ambulatory surgery activity compared to other countries that do not. In these days of tightening budgets, governments should look to ambulatory surgery as a way to provide better care at lower cost, and should incentivize it.

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