

# How do General Practitioners in Switzerland perceive their role in prevention and health promotion? Understanding the barriers to implementation.

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# Background

- § Increase of scientific evidence on the effectiveness of health promotion and prevention (primary and secondary) in ambulatory care setting
- § Multiple recommendations and guidelines
- § Potential of general practitioners (GPs)
- § Barriers to implementation

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  - § Multiple recommendations and guidelines
  - § Potential of general practitioners (GPs)
  - § Barriers to implementation
- ∅ Lack of information on Swiss GPs perspective

## Objectives: Obtain the GPs' point of view on:

- § Understanding and conceptions of disease prevention and health promotion
- § Perceived barriers
- § Insights into how to address them
- § Needs and expectations regarding support

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### ∅ Choice of qualitative approach: **Focus groups**

- ü exploratory research technique
- ü avoids prejudging which issues of relevance to subjects

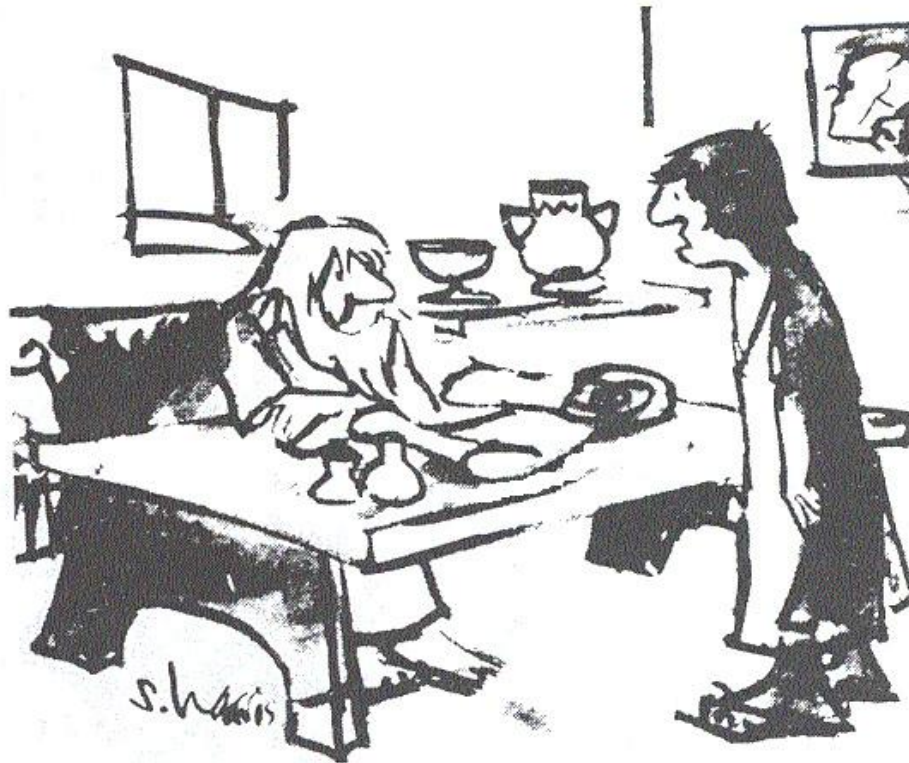
# Methodology: Organisation of groups

- § 102 GPs from 8 cantons in German- and French-speaking parts of Switzerland
- § 13 focus groups (G: 5; Fr: 8)
- § Approximately 9 participants per group
- § Purposive sampling
- § Sessions audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim
- § Thematic content analysis of transcripts

# Structure of Focus Group Interview

<b>Perceptions &amp; Practices</b>	<p>§ What does disease prevention and health promotion mean to Swiss GPs?</p> <p>§ How are these activities carried out in daily primary care office routine?</p>
<b>Problems</b>	<p>§ Physician-specific</p>
<b>Solutions</b>	<p>§ Patient-specific</p> <p>§ System-specific</p>

# Results



« I just don't seem to  
have a *mens sana in  
corpore sano* »



# Perceptions & Practices

- § Prevention interventions
  - § emerge within the doctor-patient relationship
  - § are tailored to patients' profile and needs
- § How GPs practice prevention interventions
  - § patient-centred, using motivational interviewing
  - § need for perseverance, repetition and positive approach
- § GPs' changing role in the health care system
  - § requires new skills for prevention
  - § intermediary between media information and patient

# Problems

## Physician-specific

- § innocuousness of prevention?
  - § increasing medicalisation
  - § generates anxiety
- § isolation
- § poor collaboration with other health-care providers
- § doubts about effectiveness/impact
- § dwindling motivation
- § lack of time

## Patient-specific

- § seeking treatment not prevention
- § socio-economic constraints
- § poorly motivated
- § different levels of health literacy

# Problems

## System-specific

- § training inadapted to new role
- § over-rigid guidelines
- § health insurance system discourages
  - § no specific reimbursement for prevention activity
  - § excess payment prohibitive (*franchise, Selbstbahl*)
- § pressure of pharmaceutical companies
- § inadequate political support for prevention

# Solutions

## Physician

- § favour relative rather than absolute goals for patients
- § improve and strengthen doctor-patient relationship
- § improve networking with other health-care workers

## Health-care system

- § include prevention counselling in Tarmed system
- § exempt prevention from excess payment
- § make available independent documentation for patients

# Solutions

## Training and further education

- § clear leadership from medical institutes
- § motivational interviewing techniques
- § develop internet platforms
- § clarify situation regarding guidelines
- § increase peer support: quality circles, paired consultations

## Political and socio-economic system

- § implementation of prevention programmes
- § clearer political support for prevention at all levels
- § ensure greater coherence between medical guidelines and public policy

# Conclusions

- § Favoured opportunistic approach since centred in doctor-patient relationship
  - ∅ recognised needs for further training
- § Identified lack of resources and tools
  - ∅ although guidelines currently taken as *aide-mémoire*, not as proscriptive
- § GPs discourse reflected awareness of their limited field of action within overall system
  - ∅ GP: a player within an ambiguous system – lack of clear mandate at all levels