



Press release

PB09-037
14 May 2009
15:00 hrs

Expenditure on care 6.2 percent up

- Accelerated growth care expenditure
- Considerable increase in spending on hospital care and medical specialists
- Modest growth spending on GP practices and medicines
- Above-average increase in expenditure on mental health care and care for the disabled
- Share of care spending in Gross Domestic Product marginally higher

Last year, national spending on health care and welfare totalled 79 billion euro, a 6.2 percent increase on 2007. In the period 2004-2008, the rate of spending on care has risen continually. According to the most recent figures released by Statistics Netherlands, spending on hospital care and medical specialist practices went up by 7.1 percent relative to 2007, while spending on prescribed medicines increased by 1.4 percent.

More jobs and higher wages accounted for a further increase in wage costs of care-providing institutions in 2008. The basic health insurance package was extended to include dental care, medicines, maternity care and emergency and non-emergency ambulance transport.

Spending on hospital care and medical specialists rose by 7.1 percent in 2008 relative to 2007. Extension of the part of hospital care that is freely negotiable, the so-called diagnosis-treatment combinations B segment, plus discontinuation of the fixed payment for medical specialists (lump sum), appear to have induced an increase in the number health care services provided last year.

Spending on GP practices rose by 1.5 percent, spending on paramedical and maternity practices by 4.4 percent in 2008. Costs of dental practices increased by 9.6 percent, as a result of raising the age limit for periodic control in the basic health care insurance package from 18 to 21 years.

Spending on prescribed medicines distributed by pharmacies increased by 1.4 percent, as against 7.5 percent in 2007. On the one hand, the consumption of more costly medicines has grown and the basic health care package currently also includes the contraceptive pill. On the other hand, the so-called preference policy advocated by health insurers had resulted in substantially lower prices for generic medicines no longer protected by patent law. The preference policy implies that health insurers select a medicine (most likely the cheapest) from a group of similar medicines.

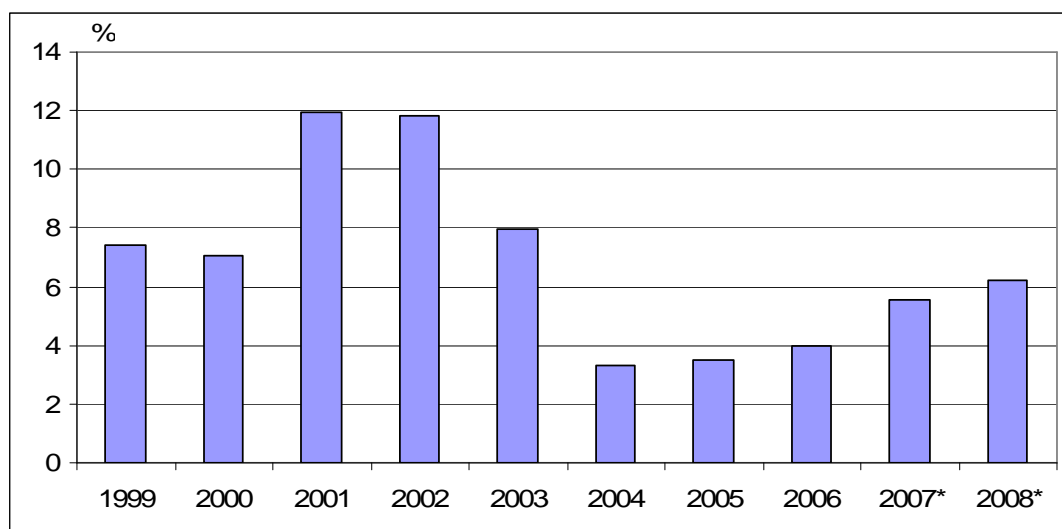
Spending on suppliers of medical aid appliances were 11.0 percent higher. Higher costs were largely due to a sharp increase in health insurance contributions towards spectacles in 2008.

Expenditure on care for disabled and mental health care rose by 9.0 and 11.6 percent respectively in 2008. Due to the introduction of a new financing scheme, data on the costs of mental health care are not as reliable in 2008 as in the past. Costs of care for the elderly grew by over 5 percent.

The health-care-to-GDP ratio rose marginally from 13.1 percent in 2007 to 13.3 percent in 2008. In the period 1998-2003, the ratio rose from 11.3 to 13.3 percent. Since then, the percentage has been fairly stable at just over 13 percent.

Per capita spending on health care was 4,809 euro, as against 4,545 euro in 2007.

Graph: Expenditure on care (change on one year previously)



Source: Statistics Netherlands