

Follow-up to a recommendation to clarify the criteria of effective, appropriate and economically efficient in relation to medical treatment

Federal Office of Public Health

Key facts

The Federal Act on Health Insurance (HIA) stipulates that only effective, appropriate and economically efficient (EAE criteria) medical services are covered.

The Confederation conducts an assessment if there are doubts about the general appropriateness of a service. Insurers also carry out assessments in individual cases, using a different approach.

The EAE nature of a medical service is an abstract concept. In a previous audit¹ in 2014, the SFAO noted shortcomings in the understanding and measurement of these criteria. It recommended that the Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH) clarify and define them.

Recommendation from 2014 still pending at the FOPH

As part of the follow-up to this extremely important recommendation, the SFAO noted that the FOPH has taken initiatives to improve the procedures for assessing the EAE criteria at the federal level. In 2021, a project was initiated within the FOPH to identify the service areas in which the application of the EAE criteria needed to be clarified.

However, the documentation concerning the new assessment procedures introduced by the FOPH is not up to date. The SFAO will close its recommendation once this deficiency has been remedied.

As was already the case in 2014, the FOPH does not intervene in the assessment of EAE criteria in individual cases. The law places this responsibility in the hands of doctors, insurers and, as a last resort, the courts. The situation is still very opaque in this respect.

Original text in French

¹ "Verification of DRG hospital invoices by health insurers" (audit mandate 14367) available on the SFAO website.