

116 117 – single European freephone number for medical on-call services

What is the purpose of on-call services?

- On-call services ensure the availability of medical treatment outside doctors' normal surgery hours, on weekends and on public holidays in the event of non life-threatening emergency.
- As illnesses do not keep to doctors' surgery hours and occur at inconvenient times, mobile on-call services are an indispensable part of medical support.
- On-call doctors also visit patients at home.
- Treating a patient at home is also cheaper than treatment in the emergency room of a clinic or than transporting them by ambulance.

How can patients contact these services?

- This varies from one Member State to another.
- In the Land Brandenburg for example, callers dial a 14-digit telephone number. The last three digits vary depending on the on-call services required.
- In other federal States in Germany and other EU Member States daily newspapers publish the telephone numbers of on-call doctors in the local region, who sometimes change daily from shift to shift.

What are the advantages of a single EU-wide number for on-call services?

- The six-digit telephone number 116 117 is short and easy to remember.
- Calls are free and the number can be used at any time without prior registration.
- This saves time-consuming searching in papers or calls to directory inquiries.
- A single number that is the same for callers everywhere in the EU and replaces the previous jumble of nationally and regionally different on-call numbers.

Who benefits from using this number?

- Anyone phoning to request a physician's on-call services outside a doctor's normal hours.

How does the single EU-wide number for on-call services work?

- In the same way that calling the single numbers 112 for emergency/fire services works. No matter where a call is made, it is automatically put through to the particular area whose on-call services are responsible.

Who is supporting the project?

- Estonia, Hungary, Latvia and Malta
- Members of the European Parliament
- European health organisations and associations
- The German government
- The Federal Ministry of Health and the Brandenburg Ministry of Health
- The KBV and other regional associations of statutory health insurance physicians
- The offices of AOK health insurance, company health insurance funds and health insurance companies at regional and federal level
- Patient associations and support groups

Who is organising the project?

- The Brandenburg Association of Statutory Health Insurance Physicians (KVBB), commissioned by the National Association of Statutory Health Insurance Physicians (KBV). The KVBB instigated the project.
- The KBV is a statutory body and as such constitutes a direct government authority. It also represents the interests of 148,000 resident doctors and psychotherapists in Germany.

For further information please contact:

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