ECONOMIST IMPACT

Country profile: Romania



Supported by AstraZeneca

Key takeaways

- **Significant progress in policy related to chronic kidney disease (CKD) has been made recently.** CKD was included for the first time in the country's National Healthcare Strategy project for 2023-2030.[1]
- **Dedicated provisions for screening and early diagnosis in primary care could facilitate more effective detection of CKD in its earlier stages.** The new National Healthcare Framework contract on medical services is now in place, meaning that CKD-related kidney health checks will be reimbursed for insured and uninsured individuals.[2] Annual primary care screening for the general population (asymptomatic adults) and patients who are at risk of CKD is also incentivised under these plans.[2, 3]
- **Romania has made great progress in expanding its electronic health records (EHR) system—which now contains around 16 million records—but a lack of linkage between systems and inadequate data collection limits its use for a chronic condition like CKD.**[4] Despite success in increasing the number of records, Romania's EHR ecosystem remains fragmented due to a lack of data from all providers, incompatibility between different systems and a shortage of funding.[4]

Screening, early diagnosis, monitoring and management

Primary health care services provided in Romania are funded through the social health insurance system, national health programmes and permanence centres.[5] Two packages (basic services package and minimum services package) are included under the social health insurance system, and both packages require registration with a family physician.[5]

Approximately 86% of the population are insured and have access to the basic services package.[5] This insurance package covers prevention, early intervention, case management and regular check-up services for chronic illnesses, including CKD.[5, 6]

The new framework contract, which adds screening and early detection tests to the basic package free of charge, enables general population screening in primary care.[7] This change in service provision was made possible after CKD was recognised as a non-communicable disease (NCD) with a high burden on the healthcare system.[5]

A new care pathway also specifies that people with a low or moderate risk of CKD are eligible for annual testing, whereas those with moderate risk of developing CKD have tests repeated every three months.[8] The pathway also specifies referral to the specialist services.[2, 8]

©Economist Impact 2023

Policies/initiatives

CKD was included in the country's National Healthcare Strategy project for 2023-2030. This has led to progress in creating policies related to screening, diagnosis, referral and treatments for CKD as it is now recognised as an NCD that has major health impacts. [2, 5-8]

This is especially important given the negative impact that the COVID-19 pandemic had on people with CKD, with one hospital reporting increased numbers of people requiring dialysis following the pandemic.[9]

Registries

Romania has three registries covering renal care. The Romanian Renal Registry (Table 1) was established in 1993 and focuses on the end-stages of CKD.[10] The Romanian Association of Nephrology Dialysis and Vascular Access registry (Table 2) was established in 2018 and includes data on patients across all stages of CKD.[11] The Romanian Registry of Predialysis (Table 3) was established by the Ministry of Health in 2019 and covers aetiology, comorbidities, chronic treatment, stage of disease and laboratory tests for CKD patients across stages all stages.[12]

A 2021 study found that approximately 13,000 patients had been added to the registry. It also suggested that data from the registry could help the government to understand the burden of the disease; improve understanding of the causes of CKD, risk factors and disease progression; and inform screening programmes[12]

Digital health and health information systems

Romania's digital health journey has been marked by ambitious initiatives that are often siloed in implementation. They also fail to address systemic issues

Table 1. Romanian Renal Registry[10]

Chronic Kidney Disease Registry	Romanian Renal Registry
Year established	1993
Stages included	End-stages
Accessibility	Limited/unclear: limited information available publicly or unclear
Outcome	No reported outcomes or surrogate data, or availability unclear
Data collected	Aggregate data on prevalent haemodialysis, peritoneal dialysis and renal therapy, patients until 2005 Starting from 2006 – individual patient data on incident as well as prevalent RRT patients, including: • date of birth • gender • cause of renal failure • date of start of first RRT • history of RRT (dates and changes of modality) • treatment centre • date and cause of death • information concerning transfer from or to other renal registries

©Economist Impact 2023

Table 2. Romanian Association of Nephrology Dialysis and Vascular Access Registry[11]

Registry	Romanian Association of Nephrology Dialysis and Vascular Access Registry
Financial and other support	Romanian Association of Nephrology Dialysis and Vascular Access and Ministry of Health (set-up and maintenance of data collection system) and hospitals (labour force for data entry)
Year established	2018
Stages included	1-5
Epidemiological research	Yes
Obligatory data collection	Yes

Table 3. Romanian Registry of Predialysis[12]

Chronic Kidney Disease Registry	Romanian Registry of Predialysis
Year established	2019
Stages included	1-5
Data collected	CKD aetiology, comorbidities, chronic treatment, stage of disease and laboratory tests

such as data collection and sharing. A key objective of the 2014-2020 National Health Strategy was to increase the efficiency of the health system by implementing e-health solutions—such as telehealth—but a lack of performance monitoring and specific targets means it is not possible to assess how far Romania has come in achieving that target.[13]

In November 2020, the Ministry of Health announced an eHealth strategy, which included plans to establish a national agency for digital health and improve data exchange.[14] To date, this has not been approved or implemented.[14]

A key success, however, is the rapid expansion of Romania's EHR system—which now contains around 16 million records.[4] But even this success story is marred by the failure to resolve broader issues, particularly around data collection and sharing between providers—limiting the use of this data for chronic conditions like CKD.[4, 5, 14] For example, in Romanian primary care, only 65% of family physicians are storing a patient's medical record electronically with only 16% sharing data with hospitals and only 2% using electronic systems to process reimbursements.[15]

CKD awareness

A study looking at the roadmap for optimising CKD care and patient-oriented research highlighted that public awareness about CKD is a specific challenge in Eastern Europe (including Romania), but there is not much information about CKD awareness at a country level.[16]

In March 2023, the Romanian Society of Nephrology (SRN), the National Society of Family Medicine (SNMF) and the Ministry of Health announced the launch of a national information and awareness campaign for chronic kidney disease.[17, 18] The campaign aims to raise awareness of risk factors for CKD and emphasises to the general public the importance of assessing kidney health in primary care.[17, 18]

©Economist Impact 2023

References

1. Ministry of Health. National health strategy 2023-2030 [Strategia națională de sănătate 2023-2030]. Bucharest: Ministry of Health [Ministerul sănătății], 2023. Available from: https://www.ms.ro/media/documents/Anexa_1_-_SNS.pdf
2. Government of Romania. Decision 521/2023: for the approval of the service packages and the framework contract that regulates the conditions the provision of medical assistance, medicines and medical devices, within the system of social health insurance [Hotărârea 521/2023: pentru aprobarea pachetelor de servicii şi a Contractului-cadru care reglementează condiţiile acordării asistenţei medicale, a medicamentelor şi a dispozitivelor medicale, în cadrul sistemului de asigurări sociale de sănătate]. Bucharest: Government of Romania [Guvernul României], 2023. Available from: https://cnas.ro/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/HG_521-2023.pdf.
3. Ministry of Health. Ministry of Health 2022-2030 action plan [SNS 2022-2030 plan de actiune]. Bucharest: Ministry of Health [Ministerul sănătății], 2023. Available from: https://www.ms.ro/media/documents/Anexa_2_-_Plan_Actiuni.pdf.
4. Grad DA, Mureșanu D. Electronic health records in Romania - window of opportunity in improving population's health? J Med Life.2022;15(11):1327-9.
5. Chukwuma A CR, Chen D, Gong E. Provider payment reform or improved primary health care in Romania. Washington (DC): World Bank Group, 2021. Available from: https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/13109e27-1cac-541b-9af4-b7da1cfdc90b/content
6. European Commission. Romania, health insurance. Brussels: European Commission. Available from: https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1126&langId=en&intPageId=4751.
7. Ministry of Health. Appendix 17: conditions of the grant of the basic package of medical services in specialty outpatient for paraclinical specialties [Anexa 17: condiţiile acordării pachetului de bază de servicii medicale în ambulatoriul de specialitate pentru specialităţile paraclinice].Norms (Ordin nr. 1857/441/2023 – Norms). Bucharest: Ministry of Health [Ministerul sănătății], 2023. Available from: https://cnas.ro/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Binder1-5.pdf.
8. Ministry of Health. Ordin nr. 1857/441/2023 – Norms. Bucharest: Ministry of Health [Ministerul sănătății], 2023. Available from: https://cnas.ro/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Binder1-5.pdf.
9. Mureșan AV, Russu E, Arbănași EM, et al. Negative Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Kidney Disease Management-A Single-Center Experience in Romania. J Clin Med. 2022 Apr 27;11(9):2452.
10. Liu FX, Rutherford P, Smoyer-Tomic K, et al. A global overview of renal registries: a systematic review. BMC Nephrology. 2015;16(1):31.
11. Jager KJ, Åsberg A, Collart F, et al. A snapshot of European registries on chronic kidney disease patients not on kidney replacement therapy. Nephrology Dialysis Transplantation. 2021;37(1):8-13.
12. Peride I, Niculae A, Checherita IA. POS-341: The importance of Romanian registry of predialysis patients for an adequate screening and prognosis. 2021;6(4):S148.
13. Scintee SG, Vladescu C. Overview of the main incremental health care reforms introduced between 2014 and 2020 in Romania. South Eastern European Journal of Public Health. 2023.
14. International Trade Administration. Healthcare. Washington (DC): International Trade Administration, 2022. Available from: https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/romania-healthcare#:~:text=In%20November%202020%2C%20Ministry%20of,medical%20service%20providers%20in%20Romania.
15. Romanian Ministry of Health. Health system reform: improving health system quality and efficiency project. Bucharest: Ministry of Health [Ministerul sănătății], 2022. Available from: https://ms.ro/media/documents/ToR-eHealth-Specialist.pdf
16. Sever M, Jager KJ, Vanholder R, et al. A roadmap for optimizing chronic kidney disease patient care and patient-oriented research in the Eastern European nephrology community. Clin Kidney J. 2021;14(1):23-35.
17. SNMF. The Romanian Society of Nephrology, the National Society of Family Medicine and the Ministry of Health launched the first national awareness campaign dedicated to Chronic Kidney Disease [Societatea Română de Nefrologie, Societatea Națională de Medicina Familiei și Ministerul Sănătății au lansat prima campanie națională de conștientizare dedicată Bolii Cronice de Rinichi. Asociatia Socie. Itatea Nationals de Medicins Familiei]. Bucharest: The National Society of Family Medicine/General Medicine [Asociația Societatea Națională de Medicina Familiei/Medicină Generală], 2023. Available from: https://snmf.ro/2023/03/10/societatea-romana-de-nefrologie-societatea-nationala-de-medicina-familiei-si-ministerul-sanatatii-au-lansat-prima-campanie-nationala-de-constientizare-dedicata-bolii-cronice-de-rinichi/.
18. 360medical.ro. National chronic kidney disease information and awareness campaign launched on World Kidney Day [Campanie națională de informare și conștientizare pentru boala cronică de rinichi, lansată de Ziua Mondială a Rinichiului]. 360medical.ro, 2023. Available from: https://360medical.ro/stiri/campanie-nationala-de-informare-si-constientizare-pentru-boala-cronica-de-rinichi-lansata-de-ziua-mondiala-a-rinichiului/2023/03/09/.

©Economist Impact 2023

This profile report is one of the deliverables in a broader project, designed and conducted by Economist Impact, which was funded and initiated by AstraZeneca. While every effort has been taken to verify the accuracy of this information, Economist Impact cannot accept any responsibility or liability for reliance by any person on this report or any of the information, opinions or conclusions set out in this report. The findings and views expressed in the report do not necessarily reflect the views of the sponsor.

©Economist Impact 2023