



The role of health education in improving health in Europe

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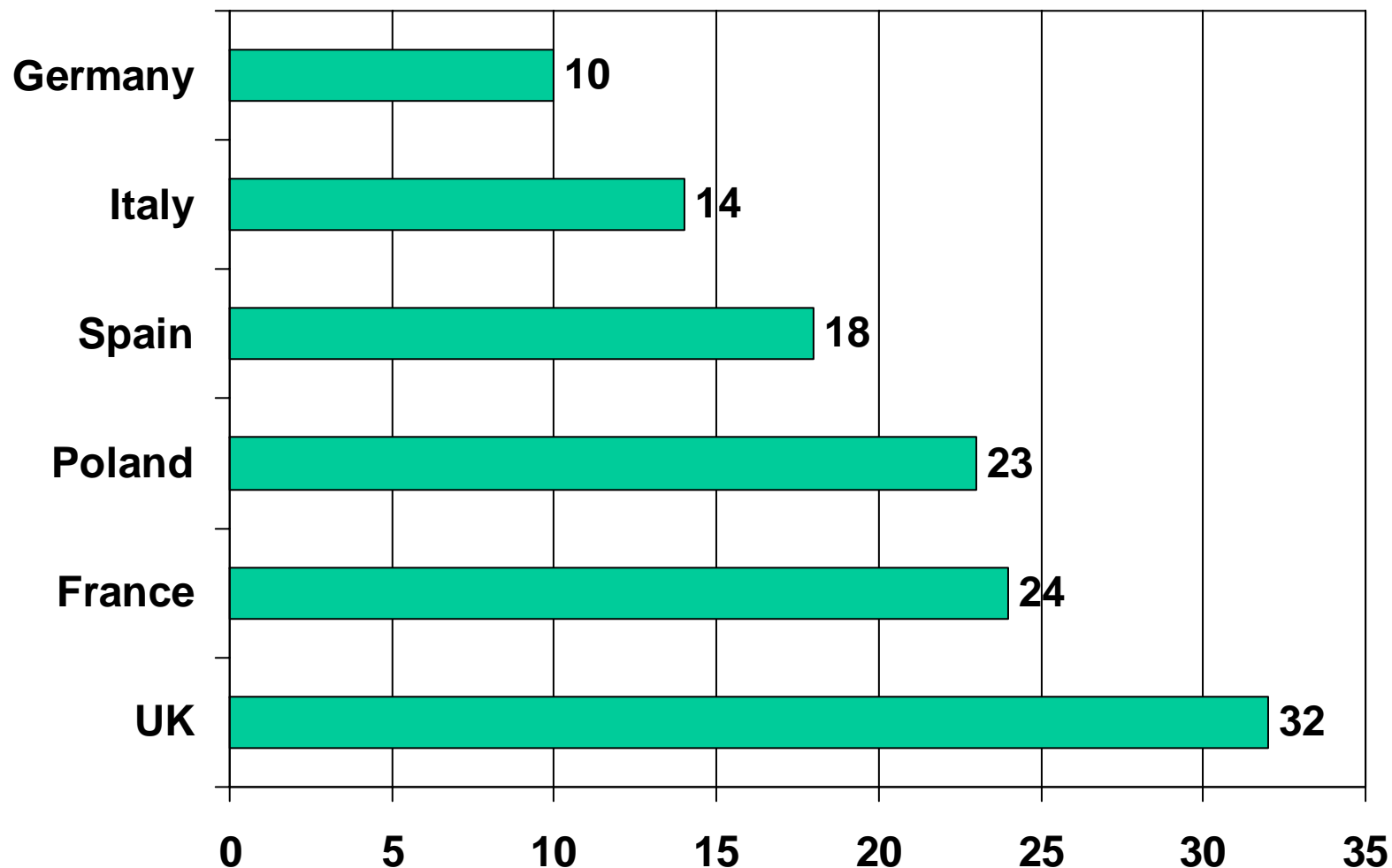
**European Patients' Forum – Alzheimer
Europe**



The role of health education and information (The theory)

- **Raising awareness of**
 - Risk factors (genetics, life style) -> Improved prevention
 - Symptoms, Screening and detection possibilities -> Timely diagnosis
 - Treatment options, medical interventions and care possibilities -> Improved management of chronic conditions and adherence to treatment
 - Ethical issues and legal questions -> Patient rights and patient centred care

From symptoms to diagnosis



« Inequalities in dementia care across Europe: An Agenda for change » in International Journal of Clinical Practice, March 2005, Volume 59, Supplement 146



Barriers to timely diagnosis - Carers

- **Lack of recognition of symptoms (70%)**
- **Lack of recognition of severity of symptoms (61%)**
- **Symptoms perceived as normal part of ageing (58%)**
- **Suspected other medical condition (52%)**
- **Denial and fear**

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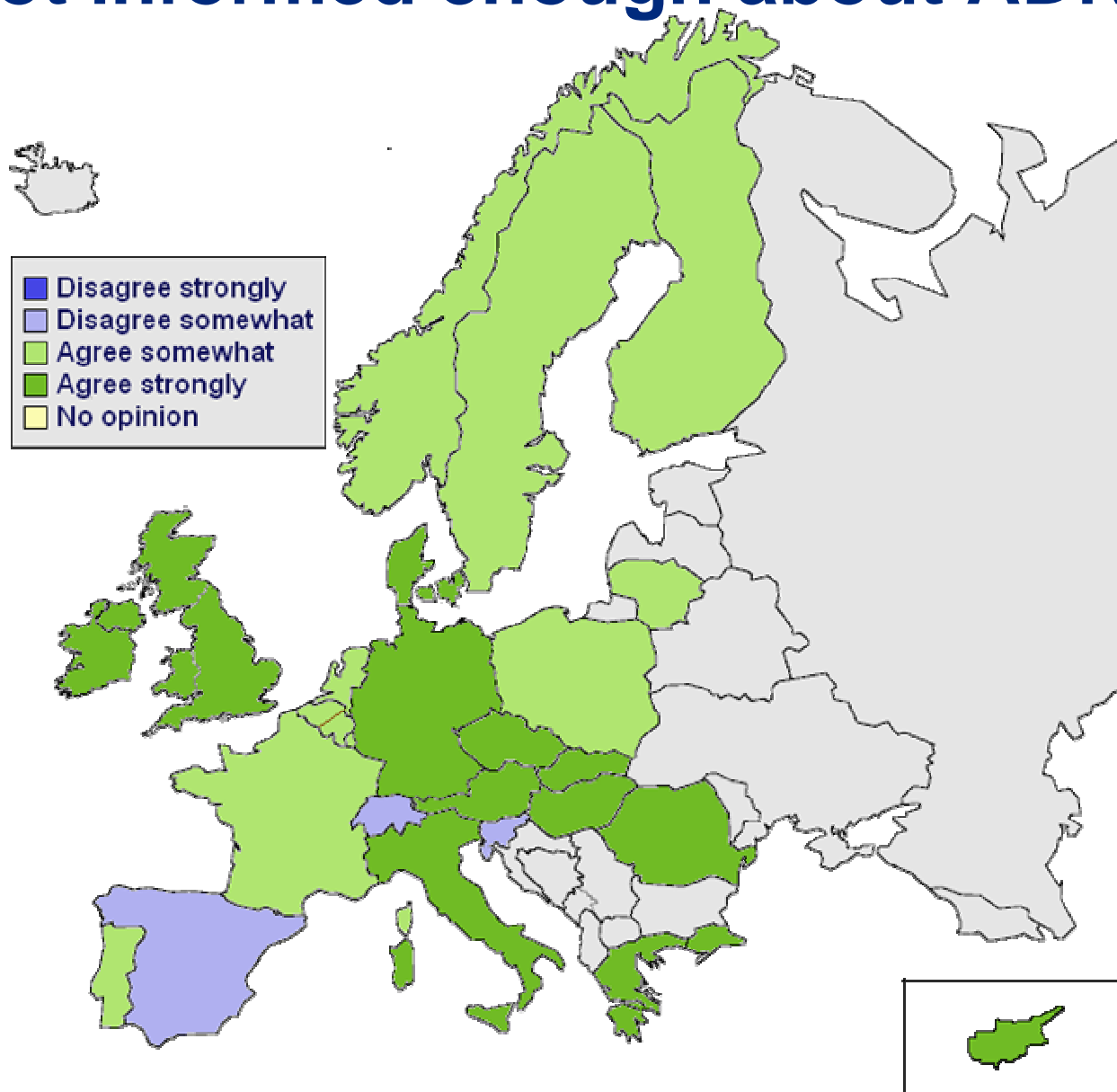


The way forward (i)

- **Improve health education through disease specific awareness campaigns (targeted at key audiences)**
 - Encourage patients to present earlier
 - Reduce time to diagnosis

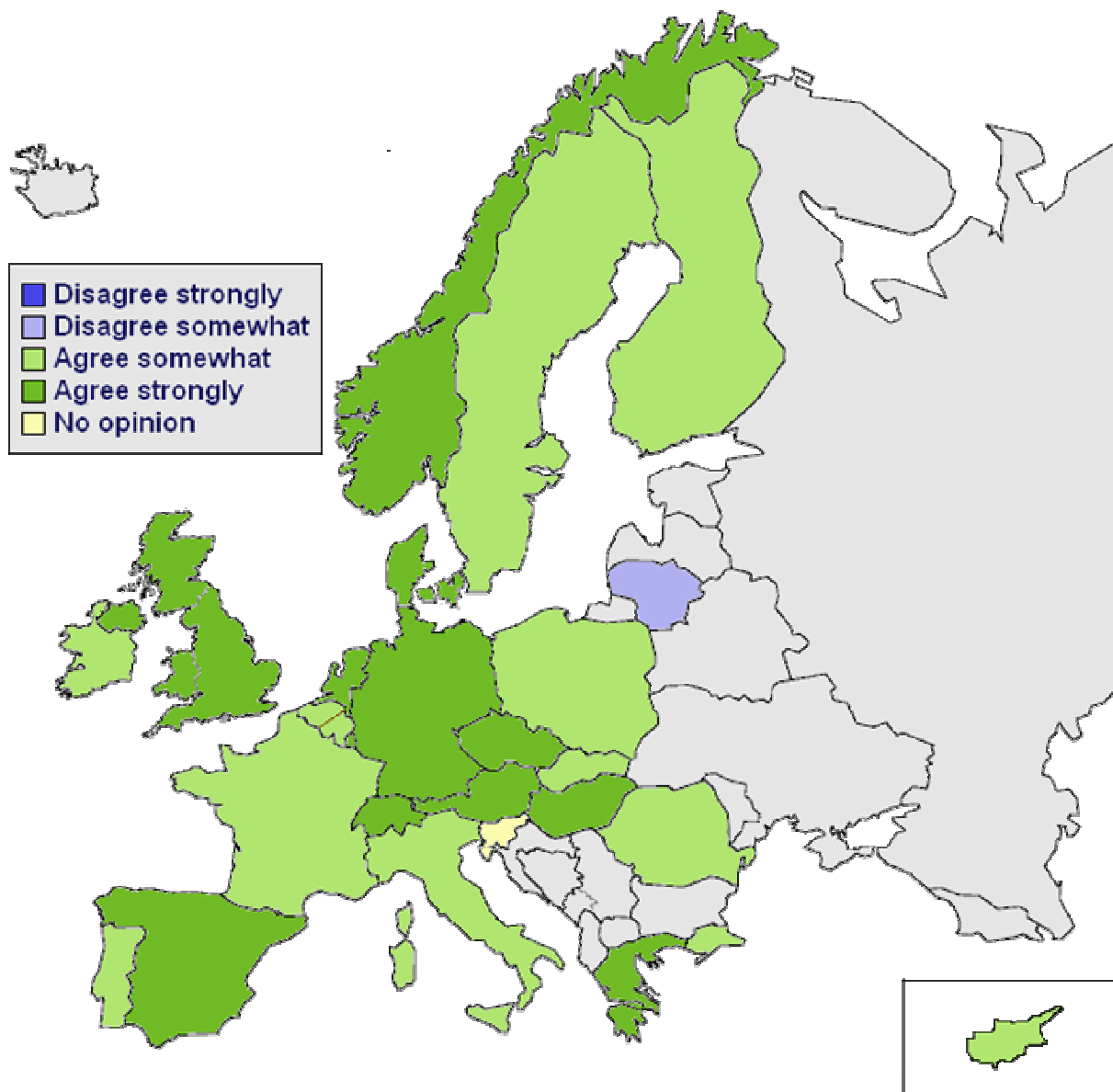


Primary health care system (GPs) is not informed enough about ADRD



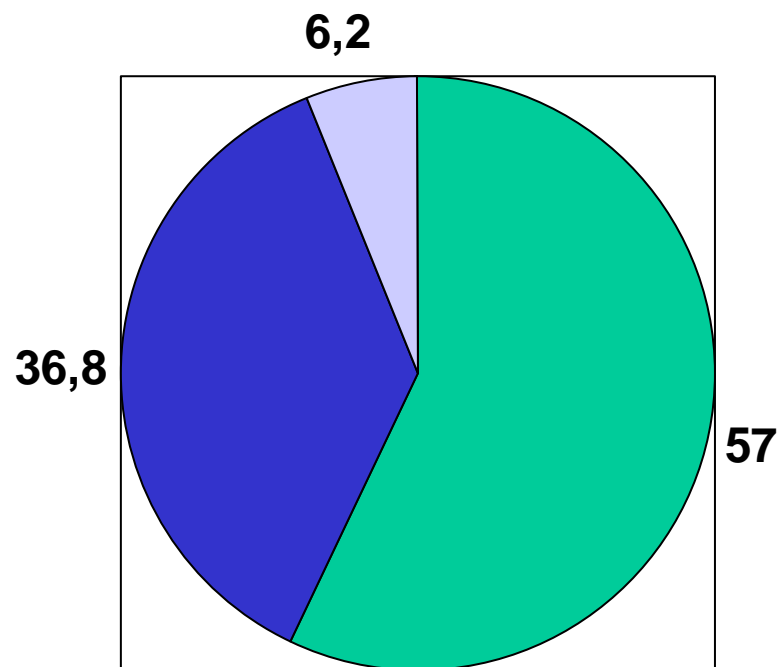


Some GPs do not refer people with memory problems to specialists



Satisfaction with diagnostic process

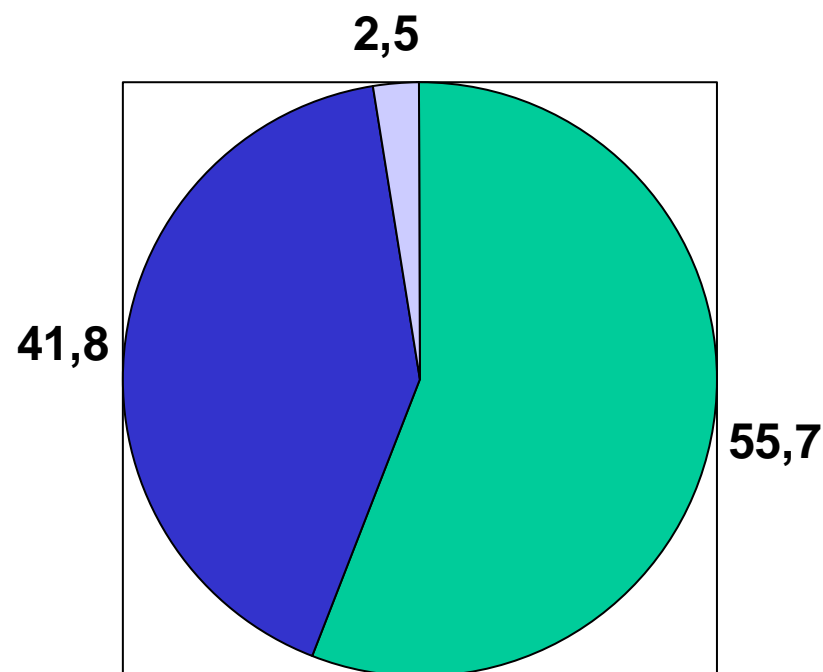
■ Satisfied ■ Dissatisfied ■ DK/DA



Alzheimer Europe (2002): European survey on Alzheimer family carers (OPDAL – Optimisation of the diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease and related disorders)

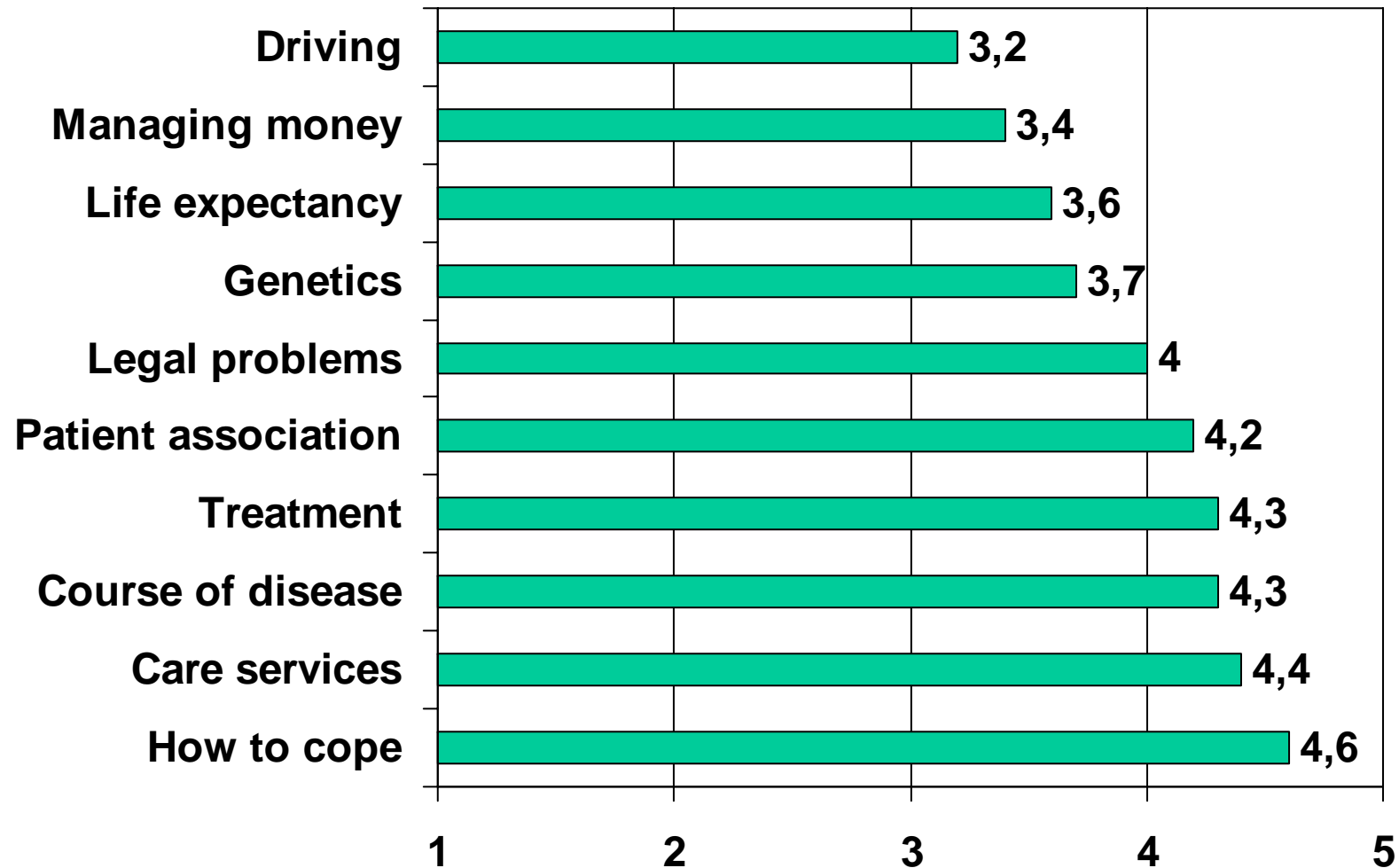
Information at diagnosis

■ Provided ■ None ■ DK/DA



Alzheimer Europe (2002): European survey on Alzheimer family carers (OPDAL – Optimisation of the diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease and related disorders)

Information needs



Alzheimer Europe (2002): European survey on Alzheimer family carers (OPDAL – Optimisation of the diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease and related disorders)



The way forward (ii)

- **Improve training of health professionals**
 - Better communication of relevant information at diagnosis
 - Better referral to specialist medical and support services (including patient associations)



Reach of Alzheimer associations

	Members	Percentage of people with dementia
Cyprus	500	18.48%
Finland	9,200	15.65%
Luxembourg	634	13.59%
Ireland	2,500	7.89%
Sweden	9,837	7.47%
Switzerland	6,300	7.13%
Norway	3,600	6.23%
France	13,553	1.78%
Italy	5,000	0.63%

Alzheimer Europe (2005): « The Alzheimer movement in Europe » in 2004 Annual Report



Access to health education and information (In practice)

- **Widening gap between informed patients and others**
 - Access to Internet or not (especially true for diseases affecting elderly people)
 - Knowledge of languages (more information available in English)
 - Possibility of access to specialist services (memory clinics)
 - Ethnic minorities, rural areas
- **Ultimately access to information = access to care, treatment and better health**

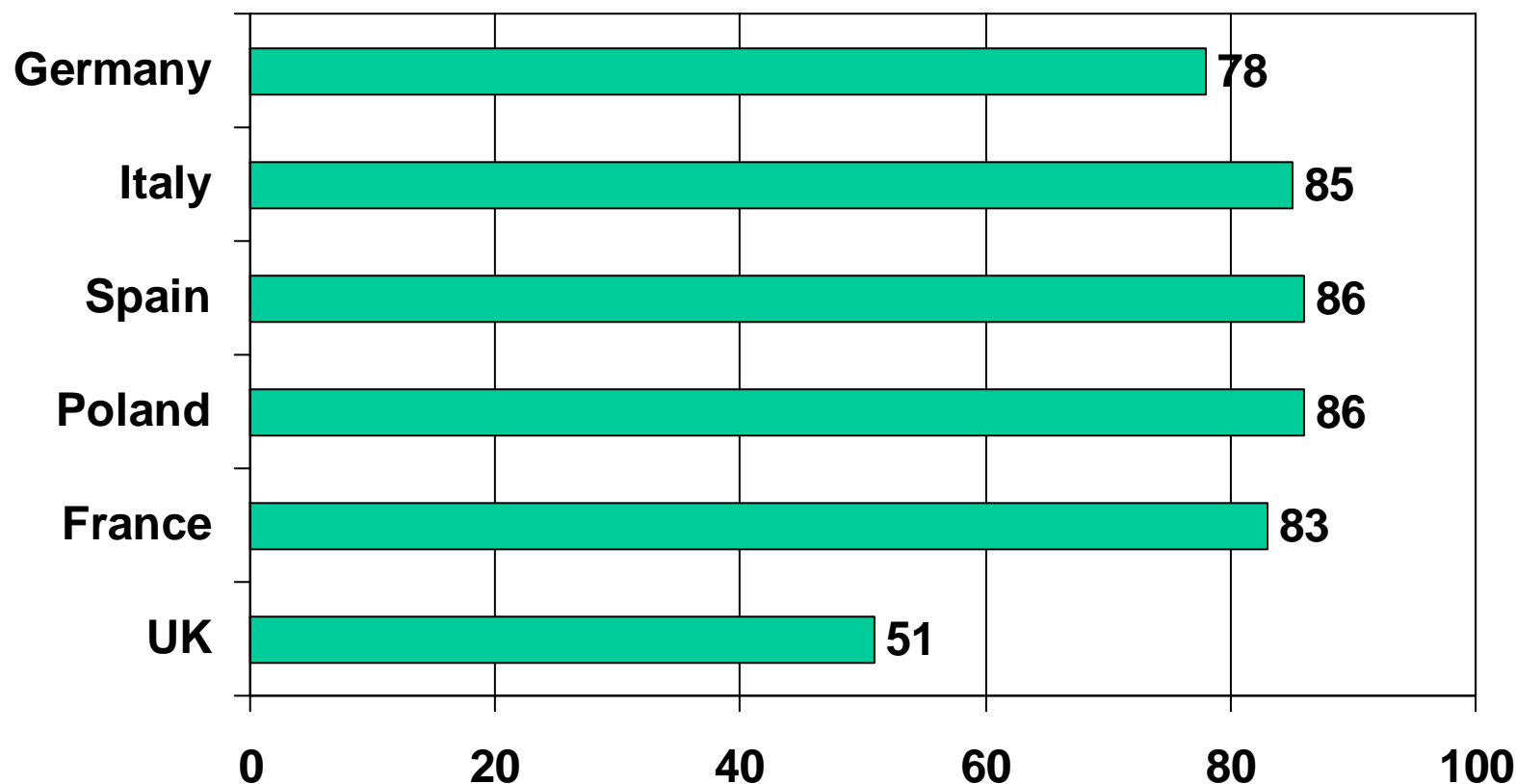


The way forward (iii)

- **Recognise role of patient and carer associations**
 - Improve information provided to patients
 - Develop better support and counselling for patients
 - Reduce isolation and stress of patients and carers
 - Outreach programmes of patient associations

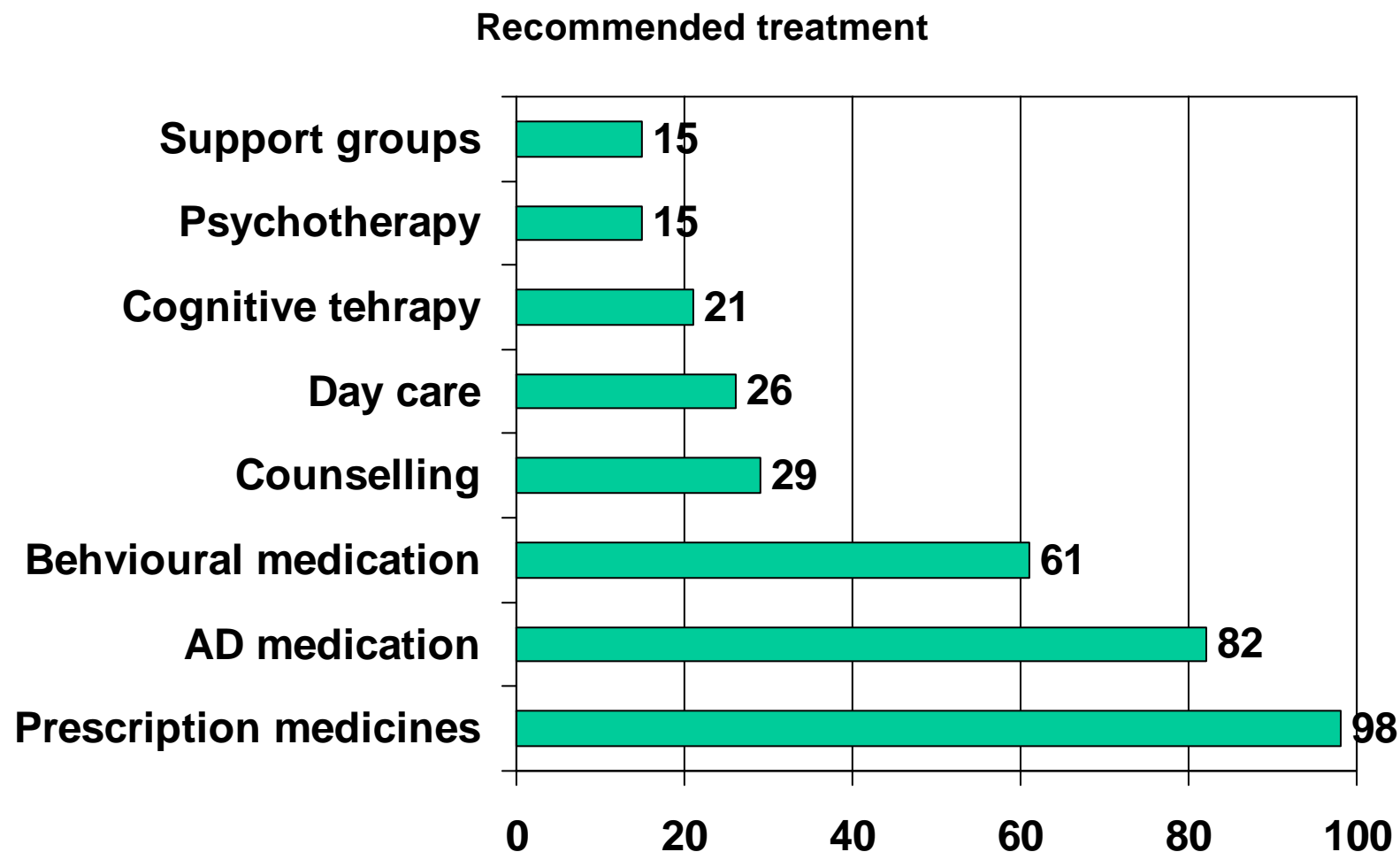
Access to treatment

Percentage of carers reporting that doctors recommended treatment at diagnosis



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Access to treatment



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The cost to society?

- Direct cost to healthcare budgets for reimbursed drugs
- Prevention of possible conditions (high cholesterol, hyper-tension, osteoporosis)
- Cure / Management / Improved quality of life for people suffering from conditions, as well as their families and carers – Price?
- Possible decrease in other healthcare costs – Fewer/NO hospitalisations, acute or emergency surgery
- Impact on other budgets – Increased productivity (loss of work days), delayed institutionalisation for people with Alzheimer's



Conclusions

- Information to patients should be diversified and strengthened to allow more patients to become informed patients
- Informed patients should be encouraged, not feared
- Informed patients are an asset to the healthcare system and society
- Budgets for health, NOT just healthy budgets