

# Italy has a national health plan (Servizio Sanitario Nazionale), which provides universal coverage for hospital and medical benefits.



The Italian public healthcare system is decentralised and is based on three levels:

1. the State
2. region
3. local health boards.



1

The State is responsible for issuing general system guidelines, establishing work contracts, handling international relations and financing research hospitals.

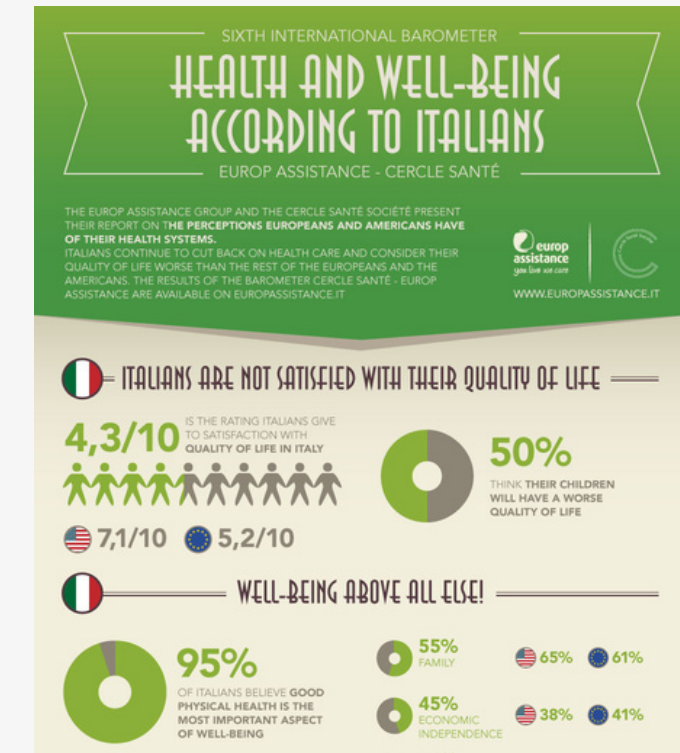
2

The 20 regions of Italy control the functioning of the health services within their areas of jurisdiction and finance independent hospitals.

3

the local healthcare units provide daily management of services and finance public and private hospitals under contract with the regions.

# Healthcare Facilities, Services & Staff



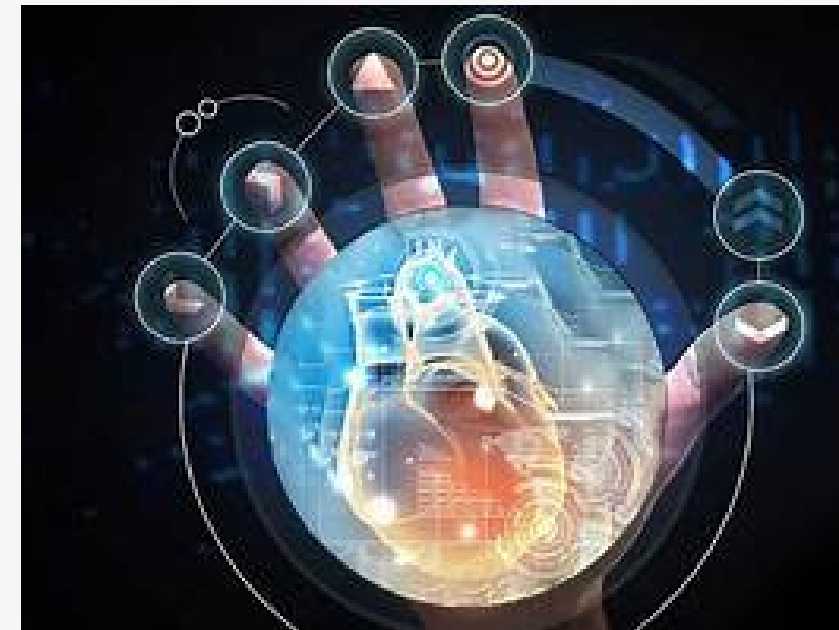
Throughout Italy, there is a coexistence of public hospitals, private nonprofit hospitals and private for-profit hospitals. While most private hospitals are under contract with the regions, public hospitals may also engage in private activities as they are, for the most part, independent hospitals.

A gatekeeper physician is responsible for providing citizens with access to secondary healthcare. Patients may choose their own physician, however each physician has a cap on the number of patients he or she is allowed to cover (1,800 patients for a general practitioner and 800 patients for a pediatrician).



# The importance of IT:

IT has played a significant role in the Italian healthcare system. Some of the most promising opportunities in the Italian healthcare IT sector are in telemedicine and communication (Internet) services. Because of the disparity between the regional healthcare networks, telemedicine is seen to hold particular promise for use in providing consultations amongst doctors and between doctors and their patients from region to region.



Already, the Lazio and Lombardia regions have established successful teleconsulting and telecardiological service programmes to provide home care as well as linking different medical facilities that have different technologies and treatments available. In 2005 a national electronic healthcare card was launched to approximately 15 million Italian citizens and residents. A key component of the Italian healthcare program, the card, is used to monitor and manage each phase of the public health expenditure cycle and contains medical as well as European health insurance information.