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Point of Entry to The Health Care System A Community Based Study in Edirne, Turkey\*

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**Abstract:** Being the first contact point in the health system is one of the main features of primary health care. Our aim is to identify whether the primary care institutions in Edirne are used as a first contact point for health services. A survey prepared for this study was carried out by face-to-face interviews with 407 families, a representative sample of the Edirne municipality region. The 1,008 adults and adolescents in these families were asked to answer the questions "to which health care institutions do you apply first when you seek health care?" and "to which health care institution do you think you should apply when you first seek health care?" Most of the subjects thought of (70%) and used (79%) hospitals as their first contact point. The distance between their homes and primary care institutions, their age and educational level did not affect people's choice of health care institutions as a first contact point, although social insurance and socio-economic status did. This study has revealed that primary health care institutions are not of the desired quality and quantity, with consequent underutilization of their services.

**Key Words:** Primary health care, health services accessibility, delivery of health care, social class, health insurance

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