The prevalence of treated diabetes in Germany and direct health care costs of individuals with diabetes were analysed for the 8-year period from 2000 to 2007, based on administrative data. Special interest was given to the incremental costs attributed to diabetes. An 18.75% sample of all members of a large local German statutory health insurance provider, "AOK - Die Gesundheitskasse" in the federal state of Hesse was analysed with regard to cases of treated diabetes. To assess the incremental diabetes-related direct costs, the cost data of individuals with diabetes was compared to that of an age- and sex-matched group of persons without diabetes. Prevalence and costs were standardized according to the gender and age distribution of the German population. Between 2000 and 2007, the administrative prevalence of treated diabetes rose continuously in Germany, from 6.5 to 8.9% (+36.8%). The number of patients treated with insulin or insulin& oral antidiabetic agents' increased by +54.7 and +61.7%, respectively. Direct costs per patient with diabetes, calculated using the unit costs reimbursed by statutory health and nursing care insurances, rose from EUR 5 197 to EUR 5 726 (+10.2%). Incremental per-capita costs were EUR 2 400 in 2000 and EUR 2 605 in 2007 (+8.5%). However, the total direct cost burden of diabetes in Germany grew from EUR 27.8 billion to EUR 42.0 billion (+51.1%). The incremental diabetes-related cost burden increased from EUR 12.9 billion to EUR 19.1 billion
There was a continuous increase in the prevalence of diabetes in Germany during the 8-year period. Although there was only a modest increase in annual diabetes-related per-capita costs, total healthcare expenditure rose substantially due to the growing number of patients being treated for diabetes.