

The prospects of using diaries in a research relating medical services

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Diaries have been used in several branches of social sciences for constructing pictures of respondents' (authors') reality. This method is less frequently used than other, „classic” ones, but is gaining ground recently in the field of market research as well as in topics like time allocation, consumer expenditures, travelling habits, social networks, health, diseases and behaviour in connection with them, or criminality. Diary researches are often complemented by other methods, most frequently by in-depth interviews to gain additional information about the topic and the circumstances of using the diary. The most important advantages of using diaries are that they may provide alternative to an interview, especially in cases when events are difficult to recall, or the topic is sensitive. They may also help to overcome problems associated with inaccurate or biased recall. Semi-structured diaries were used to test the usability of this method on the one hand, and to explore the most typical communication processes, feelings and thoughts in a consulting room. Results indicate that diaries are suitable to use in this field and suggest several specific features of medical services.

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