



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL POLICY & HEALTH

Sectoral Committee

Weekly Update

23.04.10



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... Presidency

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Informal Meeting of Health Ministers Reducing healthcare inequalities in the EU

The main items on the agenda of the informal meeting of EU health ministers, where those of working towards reducing inequalities in health care, as well as making progress on European directives concerning organ transplants and cross-border medical care.

By making healthcare inequalities a priority on the agenda of the informal meeting, the Spanish Presidency intended to place health equity on both the European and national agendas, at a time when there is increased consciousness regarding the social and economic cost of health inequality and its impact on the well-being and development of countries.

As a first step, the Spanish Presidency proposed the enlargement of public health monitoring and surveillance systems, not only as predictive indicators, but also to achieve better short- and long-term information management, which will enable Member States to make appropriate political decisions.

EU countries differ in the degree to which they engage in policy monitoring and evaluation, and a lack of appropriate and timely information hinders public health action. As a result, it is necessary to implement homogeneous information systems and indicators which permit cross-border comparisons.

Furthermore, improvements can be made in the health system itself by redistributing healthcare opportunities, basing the provision of services on the health care needs of different social groups rather than on demand.

The Spanish Presidency presented its proposal on the directive on cross-border health care services, which was rejected at the last Council meeting held during the Swedish Presidency in December. Spain has drawn up a "commitment document" which attempts to collate the proposals and concerns of all the parties and it is hoped that this directive will also be approved during the Spanish Presidency.

European Commissioner for Health Care and Consumer Policy, John Dalli, and the Director General of the World Health Organisation (WHO), Margaret Chan, also attended the meeting.



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...Commission

Patient safety

EU-wide databank for medical devices to boost market surveillance

The European Commission adopted a decision which will oblige all EU countries to use, as of May 2011, a European databank for medical devices (Eudamed). Eudamed is a secure web-based portal for rapid information exchange between national authorities.

Under EU law, medical devices cover thousands of product types used in diagnostics, prevention and therapy. These products range from pacemakers, hip implants or X-ray machines, to products used daily such as syringes or blood tests. Medical devices that conform to the European legislation may be traded on the EU single market. But important data on their safety (for example – data on conformity certificates, including those withdrawn or refused, on clinical investigations, or reports on malfunctioning or incidents) is currently collected at national level. This comprises reports on 600 known incidents involving medical devices in 2009. Today, such data are only shared manually.

The Eudamed databank is aimed at:

- boosting market surveillance, as national authorities will be able rapidly to access crucial safety data for medical devices on the EU market, and to respond to risks, for example by ordering a withdrawal;
- eliminating administrative hurdles for manufacturers of in vitro diagnostic (IVD) devices. At present, they must notify every EU country concerned separately when placing certain IVD devices on the market. Eudamed will allow them streamlined registration.
- reducing the risk for patients of a safety incident or malfunctioning. In particular, rapidly sharing information on any known incidents will diminish the risk of recurring incidents elsewhere in the EU.

More information on Eudamed:

<http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/medical-devices/market-surveillance-vigilance/eudamed/>



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World Veterinary Day

24.04.2010

"One World, One Health: more cooperation between veterinarians and physicians."

This year's theme for the World Veterinary Day stresses the vital link between animal and public health and the importance of cooperation between the veterinary and public health fields.

Recent outbreaks of avian influenza and Q fever remind us that public and animal health are intimately connected. The rise of new and emerging infectious diseases threatens not only animal health but also humans, including the food supply and the economy.

In this context, veterinarians play a crucial role in the link between animals, their owners and society at large, as they are responsible not only for animal health, but also animal welfare, public health, food safety and food security. This concept will also be highlighted during the World Veterinary Year, which will take place in 2011, to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the creation of the first veterinary faculty in the world that was set up in Lyon, France.

The 2010 EU Veterinary Week will take place 14 - 20 June.

More information:

<http://www.worldvet.org/taxonomy/term/24> , www.one-health.eu

Health-EU Newsletter Issue 49

Health inequalities – Tackling the "causes of the causes" of poor health

Other articles include:

A Eurobarometer survey on patient safety.

Roma people – their fight against poverty and prejudice

(These articles may be accessed through hyperlinks in the newsletter)

http://ec.europa.eu/health-eu/newsletter/49/newsletter_en.htm



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...Eurobarometer

Patient safety and quality of healthcare

It is estimated that in EU Member States between 8% and 12% of patients admitted to hospitals suffer from adverse events whilst receiving healthcare. In addition, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) estimates that healthcare-associated infections occur to 4.1 million patients and cause 37 000 deaths annually.

KEY FINDINGS

- Nearly half of the respondents feel they could be harmed by healthcare in their country;
- Over 25% of respondents claim that they or a member of their family have experienced an adverse event with healthcare. However, these events largely go unreported.
- Of the people who underwent surgery, 17% say written consent was never obtained, though great variance across the Member States is evident.
- Whether harm occurred in their own country, or another Member State, most respondents think that an investigation into the case or financial compensation would be the most likely forms of redress.
- When thinking of high quality healthcare, the most important criterion is well-trained medical staff, followed by treatment that works.

Special Eurobarometer on 'Patient safety and quality of healthcare'

http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_327_en.pdf

Europeans support policies aimed at reducing alcohol-related harm

A recent Eurobarometer survey shows that alcohol consumption in the EU is at a similar level to four years ago.

KEY FINDINGS

- Three out of four respondents said they consume alcoholic drinks up to three times a week.
- Young people aged 15-24 years are more likely than older age groups to have five or more drinks at a time, and frequent binge drinking is widespread across the EU.
- There is high awareness that harmful consumption is linked to liver diseases but low awareness that it also causes cancer.
- 89% of respondents were in favour of an 18-year age limit for selling and serving alcoholic beverages across the EU.
- There is also strong endorsement for action against drink-driving, such as random checks by the police (83% in favour) and a lowered blood alcohol limit for young drivers (73% in favour).

Special Eurobarometer "EU citizens' attitudes towards alcohol"

http://ec.europa.eu/health/eurobarometers/index_en.htm