



31 March Working party: yes to relevant health information

Brussels, March 2009, 27

Relevant health information: the right choice

Dear Sir/Madam,

For a constructive approach on the legal proposals on patient information, please find attached the Joint Declaration of HAI Europe, ISDB, AIM, BEUC, MiEF “Relevant Health Information for Empowered Citizens”.

Health information is a fundamental part of healthcare. Useful patient information should enable users to analyse their concerns, give them a realistic idea of the evolution of their health status, help them to understand when further investigations are necessary, to know what treatments exist and what they can expect from them, and to make informed choices (or participate in the choice) among the different available options.

Relevant health information should be:

- **reliable:** evidence based (listing data sources), unbiased, and up-to-date, with full transparency on authorship and financing (enabling rejection of information influenced by conflicts of interests);
- **comparative:** presenting benefits and harms of the full range of available treatment options (including, where appropriate, the option not to treat), together with an explanation of the course of the disease or condition;
- **adapted to users:** understandable, accessible, and culturally sensitive.

In order to say “yes” to proposals for relevant health information, one has to put public interest of European citizens first.

The future of improved access to relevant patient information for European citizens’ must therefore not be hampered by compromises on the controversial proposals from the EU Commission, which will de facto lead to the legalisation of direct-to-consumer advertising (DTCA) in Europe, more adverse effects and irrational use of medicines, and put financial sustainability of Member state’s public health systems at risk. The core question is: Should public authorities use their limited resources to act as law enforcers in order to control the proposed direct-to-patient communication of pharmaceutical industry, or rather be proactive and invest in validated processes towards the provision of independent and comparative information to the general public?

The EU Commission needs to work on a new and more ambitious strategy truly aimed at improving European citizens’ access to relevant, independent and reliable health information.

We also attach again our joint AIM, ESIP, HAI Europe, ISDB, MiEF analysis of the “Legal proposals on ‘information’ to patients by pharmaceutical companies: a threat to public health”.

We hope that these documents will be useful for the working party on the 31st of March in Brussels.

Best regards,

**International Society of Drug Bulletins (ISDB)
& Medicines in Europe Forum (MiEF)**

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