Contribution to public consolation on the legal proposal on information to patients

Prevention and early diagnosis are long since the cornerstone of health policies all over the world. Health education can play a major part in helping citizens detect problems and seek appropriate consultation and help in time.

Among Member States of the EU, rules but also available resources vary greatly and this results in unequal access of patients to information on health issues. We believe that the EU plans to legislate over the flow of medical information to patients and the public is a positive initiative. There is an urgent need to create a modern framework for high quality health information delivered to people in European Countries.

In Greece, patients Associations are growing and have gained enough power. Athens Alzheimer's Association is participating in this public consultation contributing to the efforts towards good knowledge about diseases and treatments.

In Greece, medication consumers are mainly older people who do not speak English and practically do not use the Internet. Current status prohibits advertising of prescription medicines to the general public. The only available source of information is health professionals.

This should be changed. Pharmaceutical industry is one of the major sources of high standard health information. Pharmaceutical companies should be allowed to deliver authorized and reliable information about diseases and treatments through TV, radio, press, internet and printed material handed to physicians.

EU should produce legislation that would create a workable distinction between information and advertising so as to allow the industry to provide non-promotional information on its medicines and their proper use. The aim should be to set standards for good quality, objectivity and reliability.

Relative practices across Member States should be harmonized and regulatory monitoring bodies at national level should be formed to ensure good compliance with European rules. These bodies should include representatives of state, patient organizations, physician Associations and pharmaceutical companies.

Finally, we agree in general with the legal proposal to change current status of information to patients in Europe but we believe that there are issues needing particular attention. In line with Better Regulation, bureaucratic procedures must be avoided.

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