



**48th PHARMACEUTICAL COMMITTEE**  
**27. - 28. 9. 1999**

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**Subject** : Working group on electronic commerce in pharmaceuticals - distribution issues

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**Background:**

Pharm 275 addressed the information/advertising issues arising from the consultation on electronic commerce. However, electronic commerce also raises a similar set of issues about possible developments and practical enforcement in the field of pharmaceutical distribution. There is a general, and understandable, unease about the public health implications of new systems or delivering pharmaceuticals to patients. Current levels of distance provision of pharmaceuticals from bases within the European Union appear to be negligible: a number of structural reasons have contributed to this, structural reasons that are likely to remain quite effective for as long as they remain in force.

Two key issues arise in this context:

- that there are web-sites, based outside the European Union, that are clearly targeting European Union citizens (written in Community languages and with EU currency pricing lists);
- that, within the European Union, information technology will open possibilities for even higher standards of safety, accuracy and efficiency in existing systems for delivering products to patients.

**Proposed mandate:**

*The Pharmaceutical Committee establishes an ad-hoc working group on the implications of electronic commerce on the delivery of pharmaceuticals to patients and asks this working group:*

- *to consider the effectiveness of existing means of safeguarding public health in the light of:*
  - *the increased potential offered by the Internet for access to pharmaceuticals from outside the European Union; and*
  - *potential developments within the European Union in information technology;*

- *if issues are identified– to elaborate concrete lines of action for discussion at the Pharmaceutical Committee; and*
- *to reflect on the role and position to be taken by the EU vis-à-vis third countries and in international organisations (WHO) and to make concrete proposals for discussion at the Pharmaceutical Committee.*

*It is proposed that, apart from the Commission and EMEA representatives, the group be made up of a representative from the European Parliament and from ECOSOC, interested representatives from Member States, to be nominated by the Pharmaceutical Committee and representatives from other interested parties including patient/consumer-associations; physician/ pharmacist associations and industry associations)*

*A first meeting will be held after the first meeting of the group that will look at advertising/information issues.*

**Action to be taken:**

For discussion/amendment and approval