A Contribution to the European Commission's legal proposal on information to patients

The Medicines Information Project (MIP) Board supports the aims of the Commission's legal proposal, and broadly welcomes its content insofar as it:

1. Establishes a framework which provides citizens of EU Member States with understandable, objective, high-quality and non-promotional information about the benefits and the risks of their medicines, and which maintains the confidence of citizens, regulators and healthcare professionals.

2. Maintains the ban on direct-to-consumer advertising of prescription medicines, making sure that there is a clear distinction between advertising and non-promotional information.

3. Avoids unnecessary bureaucracy, in line with the principles of Better Regulation.

The experience of the MIP Board is that the pharmaceutical industry can deliver reliable, objective, unbiased and user-friendly information about prescribed medicines. We have achieved this using a model (the Medicines Information Project), which allows manufacturers to work together rather than individually, and which is under the guidance and governance of a multi-sector stakeholder group (including patient groups, Government, the National Health Service, health professionals, regulators and the industry).

The Medicine Guides produced under the auspices of the MIP Board (accessible through www.medicines.org.uk) are currently based strictly upon the approved summaries of product characteristics and patient information leaflets. However, in developing the resource we have become increasingly aware that, particularly with medicines which have been in use for many years, these do not always include important information clearly accepted by clinicians and widely applied in clinical practice. We recognise that this has been a limitation in the usefulness of the patient information that we have produced. We therefore propose that information for patients should be able to go beyond the key elements specified in the regulatory documents, as long as this reflects a clear clinical consensus, which is supported by advice from leading experts in the relevant specialty.

About the Medicine Information Project (MIP) Board

The MIP Board brings together a multi-disciplinary group of health sector stakeholders, with representation from the Department of Health, the NHS, the pharmaceutical industry (including the industry regulator, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency [MHRA]), and patient and professional groups.

The MIP Board was first formed in 2003 to explore how to meet patients' information needs given changes in patterns of healthcare, including the development of a Government strategy for patient choice and empowerment and the wider changes in society, such as information provision through the internet. Medicine Guides are the output of the work of this group. The MIP Board governs this resource, providing guidance on its continued development, improvement and enhancement.

The MIP Board is co-chaired by Elizabeth Wincott, Chair of the Long-term Conditions Alliance and David Pruce, Director of Practice and Quality Improvement at the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain.

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