



European Union of Medical Specialists
Union Européenne des Médecins Spécialistes

The Newsletter of European Medical Specialists

Outcomes of the UEMS Council Meeting Brussels, 18.03.2006

Summary:

- Eurobarometer survey shows clear concerns from EU citizens towards medical errors
- France fails to comply with 2003 ECJ Ruling on Biotechnology legislation
- Commission launches EU network to combat resistance against antibiotics
- Next Meeting of the UEMS Council will be held in conjunction with the ceremonies for the 50th Anniversary of the Hungarian upheaval

In this issue:

- Medical errors perceived as a key problem by Europeans 2
- Internal Market Infringement proceedings 2
- EU funded projects related to Health 3
- Next UEMS Council Meeting in Budapest 4

The Board and Council of UEMS convened in Brussels on 18th March last. These meetings were notably the opportunity for the newly elected Executive of UEMS, chaired by Dr. Zlatko Fras to present their priorities for the three years to come.

The issues addressed by the Council of UEMS notably included:

- **The project of a specific Directive on Health Services:** After the exclusion of healthcare from the scope of the draft Services Directive, it is expected that the European Commission will present a new proposal specifically dedicated to the health sector (UEMS News 2006/03). The main areas to look into are the free movement of both patients and professionals and the reimbursement of health services received in another country. In this respect, a motion pledging for a full collaboration and consultation of all the European Medical Organisations was carried by the UEMS Council.

- **The Working Time Directive:** After a lengthy discussion on the potential impact of a fully implemented WTD, the Council of UEMS agreed to conduct a survey among its constituency (national associations and Sections & Boards).

The UEMS towards a new strategy for the future...



Source: www.home.earthlink.net

- **The Directive on physical agents:** The Executive of UEMS was called on by the Section and Scientific Society of Radiology to take action towards this Directive as it was likely to hinder the conduct of MRI scan in the near future. Contact was made with the responsible Commission

services, which led to satisfactory outcome up to now.

- **The relations with the UEMS S&B:** The improvement of communication between Council and S&B was discussed. The possibility to hold more and/or longer meetings, and possibly a Conference, was also addressed. The UEMS Council also carried an amendment to the Rules of Procedure aiming to officially give a voice, reliant on the fulfilment of their duties, to the S&B in their annual May meeting. (UEMS 2006/04)

- **Multidisciplinary Joint Committees:** The proposal to set up a MJC of Vascular Medicine was rejected as no Section responded to the call for interest. Consultation is still in force with respect to Child Neurology, Pain Medicine and Genetics.

- **European Medical Organisations:** Together with the representatives of the other EMOs present, the new Executive of UEMS reaffirmed its wish to ever improve collaboration on an equal standing and mutual

Continued on page 4

The next meetings of the Board and Council will be held on 3rd&4th November 2006

Medical errors perceived as a key problem by Europeans

According to a recent Eurobarometer survey on medical errors, European citizens generally do not feel protected from medical errors and European health care is not perceived to be as safe as it should be. Studies carried out by the Member States showed that approximately 13-16% of hospitalized patients are victims of medical errors with a mortality rate of 5-8%. 80% of respondents said that medical errors were a serious problem in their country, and almost one quarter of those surveyed said that they or their family had been the victim of a medical error. Furthermore, 51% of people thought they couldn't avoid serious medical errors in hospital. Nordic Member

States appear to have the highest rate of confidence in their health care systems, while the lowest rate of confidence was recorded in Italy, Poland and Lithuania. In general, incidents in hospitals appear to be more common than incidents of unsuitable medication.

The highest numbers of incidents experienced in hospitals are found in Latvia (32%), Denmark (29%) and Poland (28%) while errors in the medication prescribed by a doctor are the most frequent again in Latvia (23%) and Denmark (21%) but also in Estonia and Malta (18% each). Austria tops the ranking having both the fewest medical errors in hospitals (11%) and in medical prescriptions (7%). Incidents are reported to be fairly

rare also in Germany and Hungary. Most respondents (51%) think that it is not likely that they as hospital patients have an influence on medical decisions affecting them, out of which 16% believe that it is outright impossible. Across all 25 Member States the lack of confidence is directed towards the quality of health care, rather than towards the professionals administering it. Most EU citizens trust medical professionals not to make a mistake while treating their patients. Dentists are appreciated with the most confidence as almost 3 in 4 respondents (74%) trust them. 69% have faith in doctors and 68% in other medical staff. However, a significant share of respondents has doubts about the quality of health care provided by these

professional groups. The proportions are respectively: 29% about doctors, 23% about dentists and 30% not feeling confident about 'other medical staff'. This can be seen to imply that the trust in the functioning of health care systems could be improved.

The intention of the Commission is to carry out a first analysis based on citizens' perception of medical errors and to integrate the results of this Eurobarometer (prepared with the cooperation of the London School of Economics) to the work of the patient safety working group and also possible other areas.

For more information on the Eurobarometer: http://europa.eu.int/comm/health/ph_publication/eurobarometers_en.htm

HOME

Internal Market - Infringement proceedings

France - Biotechnology legislation

The European Commission recently decided to refer France to the European Court of Justice a second time for failure to comply with a judgement by the Court from 2003 over biotechnology legislation.

Despite the Court ruling and subsequent warnings

from the Commission, France has still only adopted partial national legislation to give effect to an EU law on the safe handling of genetically modified micro-organisms. The GMM Directive regulates research and industrial activities involving, for example, genetically modified viruses or bacteria under conditions of con-

tainment, and aims at protecting the environment and human health against potential dangers of biotech laboratory experiments where such organisms are used. The Commission will also ask the Court to impose a daily fine of €168 800 on France to apply from the day of a second judgement by the Court in this matter.



LUXEMBOURG

Source: www.europa.eu.int

HOME



EU funded projects related to Health

GRACE - New EU Network to combat resistance to antibiotics

A new scientific network, supported by the EU's Research Framework Programme, was recently launched by the European Commission to tackle the increasing problem of resistance to antibiotics when dealing with lower respiratory tract infections, such as bronchitis or pneumonia. This Network of Excellence, GRACE, will aim to pool European expertise and excellence in this field to increase knowledge, ensure the practical application of any research findings, develop new diagnostic tests and improve education and training. The network will bring together 17 academic groups, from 9 EU Member States. Respiratory tract infections affect millions of people every year, particularly the very young and the elderly and entail a major cost to European society.

Antibiotic resistance and antibiotic use vary widely within and between European countries, but there is general agreement that the over-prescription of antibiotics to tackle illnesses such as bronchitis and pneumonia is contributing to the rise of resistance to these medicines

in the organisms that cause these diseases. In the absence of clear guidelines on antibiotic use based on robust science, it is left to doctors to make decisions on their own.



So the GRACE (Genomics to Combat Resistance against Antibiotics in Community-acquired LRTI in Europe) Network will seek to provide better information for doctors and patients about antibiotic use. It will link scientific research centres of excellence and primary care networks throughout Europe, including internationally recognised leaders in fields such as basic medical sciences including genomics, applied laboratory sciences, primary health care including general practice, hospital medical practice, epidemiology, communication sciences, information technology, health economics, modelling and professional training and development. Such a comprehensive network will cement Europe's position as an international leader in the field of re-

search into respiratory infections.

The GRACE network will not only co-ordinate research, but will also address the best possible use of results, through the involvement of small and medium-sized companies that can help to develop bed-side diagnostic tools. It will also address the need to provide proper information and training for healthcare professionals through both web-based teaching and practical courses. Looking further into the future, GRACE will be in a position to address many other future research issues and conduct clinical trials such as epidemiological studies on flu and many other emerging infectious diseases, studying rapid diagnostic testing, evaluating new antibiotics, antivirals, and vaccines. This could potentially lead to a virtual "European Lower Respiratory Tract Infection Research Centre".

The network will receive €11.5 million from the EU's Research Framework Programme and will run until at least 2011.

For any further information on the GRACE project, please consult the following website:

<http://www.GRACE-LRTI.org>



Source: www.aafb.org

We know that there is growing concern among the public about rising rates of antibiotic resistance to illnesses that affect many of us every year. GRACE is a good example of research tackling the issues that matter to people. By pooling our excellence at European level, we have a much better chance of finding answers more quickly.

Janez Potocnik
European Commissioner
for Science
and Research

HOME



Avenue de la Couronne 20
Kroonlaan 20
BE-1050 Brussels

Tel +32 2 649 51 64
Fax +32 2 640 37 30
Email secretariat@uems.net
asg@uems.net

UEMS on the web:
www.uems.net

The next UEMS Council Meeting will be held in Budapest on 3rd & 4th November 2006

At the Council Meeting held in Brussels on 18th March last, Dr. Zoltan Magyari (Vice-President) officially invited the UEMS, on behalf of the MOTESZ (Association of Hungarian Medical Societies), to Budapest on 3rd and 4th November 2006 in order to link the UEMS meetings with the official ceremony of the 50th Anniversary of the Hungarian upheaval of 1956.



If you have any views with regard to the issues covered in this Newsletter, do not hesitate to contact the Secretariat of UEMS.

Continued from page 1

respect of the independence of every partner.

- **Membership:** The Council of UEMS unanimously accepted the "Union of Bulgarian Medical Societies" into the UEMS.

- **Working groups:** The WG on CME-CPD and postgraduate training finalised their draft position paper which will soon

be circulated for consultation among UEMS constituency.

- **GIN:** An appraisal will be conducted with pilot projects from Internal Medicine and Gastroenterology.

- **EACCME:** Beside the full annual report (UEMS 2006/02 & UEMS News 2006/04), i.e. continuous progress and definition of a clear and transparent flowchart, the UEMS Ex-

ecutive recalled that the mutual agreements were open in every time and must simply be sent to the Secretariat in order to come into force directly. Extensive coverage of these issues is provided in the Report on the Board and Council Meetings (UEMS 2006/07). The outcomes of the UEMS Council can be found on the UEMS website: www.uems.net.

With an increasing membership, the UEMS will be now looking into addressing as many as professional issues required

by specialist practice in Europe.