



The Newsletter of European Medical Specialists

Editorial

This issue of the UEMS Newsletter addresses a certain number of crucial issues and developments at the global level, which sooner or later will have an impact—potentially destructive—on European public health and healthcare systems.

The current economic downturn naturally has direct implications on how national governments will manage and allocate their shrinking resources. It is feared that this will have severe implications for the organisation of healthcare systems, and at the end of the day for patients.

The two other issues addressed are climate change and obesity.

As European citizens, we all expect the EU to find appropriate ways for tackling these challenges.

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June 2009

Outcomes of the UEMS Council Meeting

Brussels, 25th April 2009

On 25th April last, the Board and Council of UEMS held their regular meeting in Brussels, which was the occasion to discuss major issues of interest to the medical profession and currently active on the European agenda. The main issues dealt with at the meeting notably included:

European Affairs

Developments in the field of **Patient's Rights in Cross-Border Healthcare**, the **Working Time Directive**, the **Recognition of Professional Qualifications** and **e-Health**, particularly the **EC Communication on Telemedicine** were debated together with examination of the UEMS position papers submitted to and welcomed by the European Commission.

Membership

The **Armenian Medical Chamber** was accepted as a new Associate Member.

Training programmes

The UEMS Council endorsed the training programmes in **Clinical Genetics** and **Emergency Medicine** which were elaborated by the respective multidisciplinary joint committees.

New Division

A new Division of **Interventional Radiology** was established under the UEMS Section of Radiology.

Rules of Procedure

The UEMS Rules of Procedure were also amended. The new version of the ROP entered into force and became applicable as from 26th April 2009.

European campaigning

Members of Council agreed to adhere to 2 campaigns:

- **Health Information for all by 2015**

The UEMS will support this global coalition which is working to provide everyone worldwide with access to an informed, fully-trained healthcare provider by 2015.

www.hifa2015.org

- **The European Partnership on Neglected Diseases (EPoND)**

This initiative consists of a new e-mail forum to share information between medical organisations about development in the field against neglected diseases.

www.dgroups.org/groups/epond/

European definition of the medical act

The amendment of the European definition of the medical act, which is now defined as:

“The medical act encompasses all the professional actions, e.g. scientific, teaching, training and educational, organisational, clinical and medico-technical steps, performed to promote health and functioning, prevent diseases, provide diagnostic or therapeutic and rehabilitative care to patients, individuals, groups or communities in the framework of the respect of ethical and deontological values. It is the responsibility of, and must always be performed by a registered medical doctor/physician or under his or her direct supervision and/or prescription.”

All documents have been displayed on the UEMS website (www.uems.net) and an extensive report (UEMS 2009/19) of that meeting will be made available soon. Please contact the Secretariat of UEMS, should you need any further information. □

For further information on issues covered in this Newsletter, do not hesitate to contact the UEMS Secretariat.

The impact of the economic crisis on healthcare systems

On the occasion of the inter-governmental meetings including the annual EU Spring Summit to address the current global economic situation, the Health Policy Forum published an Open Letter on Economic Crisis and Health which calls upon everyone to do all within their powers to protect the health and well-being of this, and future generations.

The general aim of the Health Policy Forum is to bring together umbrella organisations representing stakeholders in the health sector to ensure that the EU's health strategy is open, transparent and responds to the public concerns, with the intention to provide an opportunity to organise consultations, to exchange views and experience on a wide range of topics, and

to assist in implementation and follow-up of specific initiatives.

According to the Health Policy Forum:

- The positive link between health and economic sustainability is clear;
- Not only is a healthy population a necessary condition for a healthy economy, but we should not forget that we need a healthy population in order to recover rapidly;
- The health sector alone constitutes 10% of EU GDP; health services and related bodies are among the largest employers in the EU;
- The impacts of reduced budgets for health and social expenditure in certain EU states, with as a consequence, an increasing social unrest in certain states;
- Investment in health is

One of my fears is that health inequalities between and within countries will become even more obvious in the next two years because of the crisis.



A. Vassiliou

European Commissioner responsible for Health

widely beneficial;

- Governments alone cannot solve all problems, implications and solutions are essentially global, hence, the need to work closely with all interested parties;
- They are seeking leadership from Heads of European States and Governments with bold and decisive action;
- They commit to work constructively with governments and other stakeholders such as the World Health Organisation and European Union Institutions to help to meet these challenges.

In the general context of the economic crisis and its impacts on healthcare systems, two conferences deserve a particular focus in our newsletter:

The European Parliament ENVI Working Group on Health held a debate on 'What is the Added Value of EU Health Policies for National Health Systems?' on April 2009, where it adopted a call namely 'Creating opportunities for Healthcare'.

According to this call:

- During a period of economic recession, one of

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Equity Channel – Connecting People for Fair Health

EuroHealthNet has recently launched the Equity Channel website which focuses on the social determinants of health. This website brings together the work of an international collaboration, together with other interested people, across the Globe who want to see action on the social determinants of health.

Its aim is to help bring about changes that will mean greater health equity for all - fair health. They aim to stimulate and support changes in policies at international, national and local levels,

plus bringing together involvement from people from all backgrounds and communities. They support the use of online networking tools to step up the pace of action and thus can rapidly share knowledge and expertise quicker than ever before. The European Commission launched in March 2005 the EU Platform for Action on Diet, Physical Activity and Health with the purpose to create a forum for stakeholders at European level which commit their membership to engaging in concrete actions designed to contain or reverse current unhealthy trends.

The aim of this Platform is not to gather all with an interest in diet, physical activity and health into the Platform, but rather to gather all those who are capable of committing themselves to action on these issues. The spirit of the Platform is to stimulate other initiatives at national, regional or local level. To date the Platform involves 32 member organisations ranging from food industry to consumer protection NGOs. The Platform meets at regular intervals for plenary meetings so as to monitor overall progress and discuss issues. Plat-

form members have agreed to monitor and evaluate the performance of commitments in a transparent, participative and accountable way.

Organisations willing to join are invited to download the Platform new membership questionnaire file for details on co-option procedure. You can find the membership questionnaire and further information on the Platform at: http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_determinants/life_style/nutrition/platform_en.htm. □

Public Health - EC Initiatives

Human, Animal and Plant Health Impacts of Climate Change

The European Commission has decided to consider climate change, and its potential consequences on health particularly in regard to its impact on the emergence of new diseases. For that reason, a staff Working Document entitled "Human, Animal and Plant Health Impacts of Climate Change" was proposed by the Commission.

The purpose of this document is to explain the means which will be im-

plemented to adapt health responses to the climate challenge, and to cope with the key problems of climate change affecting human, animal and plant health. It also describes what means are currently in place, and the key steps that the Community and the Member States will have to take in order to tackle this problem in the most effective way, with the tools and financing plans available.

The following points on

human, animal and plant health are considered as priority:

- Strengthening cooperation between the services of these three branches of health (health, animals, plants);
- Developing action plans in the event of extreme weather conditions, in order to be better prepared and to react in the best way;
- Gathering more reliable information on the risks of climate change whilst maintaining internatio-

nal cooperation, in particular with the WHO, as cooperation beyond that between Member States will be required to be more effective;

- Providing additional effort to identify the most effective measures;
- Improving the surveillance and the control of the animal diseases.

For more information you can visit: http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_threats/climate/climate_en.htm. □

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the most sensitive challenges for the EU and its Member States is providing the healthcare that people need;

- A political need to promote health related actions because this sector runs the risk of being deeply challenged by the economic recession and budgetary constraints;

- Member States do not have the choice whether to address health issues or not; the fact that Member States retain their competencies in organising, providing and funding the healthcare of their citizens, should not preclude the EU from providing support; The EU could play a role by: promoting policy shar-

ing and benchmarks, patient safety, addressing the issue of health inequalities etc; The Financial Sustainability of Healthcare Systems Conference held in Prague on 10-11 May was aimed to foster the discussion on the sustainability of the EU financial systems, in the context of the current harsh economic climate,

where EU health and welfare systems face significant financial pressure. The discussions looked at shedding light on the notion of 'financial sustainability', and it highlighted that the way healthcare financing is organised has significant implications for the efficiency of health systems. □

The impact of the economic crisis on healthcare systems



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**For further
information
on issues
covered in this
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EVENT REPORTS

20th Anniversary of the re-establishment of the Polish Chamber of Physicians and Dentists

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the re-established professional self-government of physicians and dental practitioners in Poland. The history of the Polish medical self-government (established in 1921, dissolved in 1939, reborn in 1945, again dissolved in 1951 and finally re-established in 1989) is strictly tied to the history of Polish independence and democracy.

The Celebration of the 20th Anniversary of Re-establishment of the Chambers of Physicians and Dental Practitioners in Poland took place in Poznań on 30th and 31st May.

The celebration events were a good occasion for summing up the 20 years of self-government's activities and discussing the future actions regarding the medical and dental professions, as well as the entire healthcare system in Poland.

During the official celebrations a number of professional and state distinctions were awarded to physicians and dentists in recognition of their achievements. One of the decorated persons was Dr Romuald Krajewski, Vice-President of the UEMS, who was awarded:

The Commander's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta, one of the highest Polish civil service distinctions awarded by the President of Polish Republic for outstanding achievements in education, science, sports, culture, arts, social activity, civil service and in promoting good relations with other countries; established in 1921 in commemoration of restoration of Polish state in 1918; and **The Medal of the National Education's Commission**, awarded by the Minister of National Education for outstanding achievements in education; established in 1956 for teachers in commemoration of the 1773 National Education's Commission considered as the first Ministry of Public Education in Europe.



EVENTS

Youth and Health Conference

9th-10th July 2009 - Brussels, Belgium

More information on http://ec.europa.eu/health-eu/youth/index_en.htm

24th Congress of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation

15th-17th October 2009 - Lyon, France

More information on <http://www.technimediaservices.fr/NOUVEAUSITE/evenement/mainframe/sofmer2009/SOFMER2009.php>

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

2009 Call for proposals for projects

Programme of Community action in the field of health (2008-2013)

Under the EU Health Programme 2008-13, proposals should provide a genuine European dimension in order to make sense both technically and in terms of policy. This means that they should involve at least two mutually independent legal entities- one main partner and one associated partner- established in two different eligible countries. Exceptionally, a project may have only one beneficiary as long as it offers a European dimension by itself. The EU Health Programme 2008-13 has three general objectives:

- To improve citizens' health security;
- To promote health, including the reduction of health inequalities;
- To generate and disseminate health information and knowledge.

For more info please visit: <http://ec.europa.eu/eahc/health/projects.html>