



UEMO

UNION EUROPÉENNE DES MÉDECINS OMNIPRATICIENS/MÉDECINS DE FAMILLE

EUROPEAN UNION OF GENERAL PRACTITIONERS/FAMILY PHYSICIANS

UEMO BULLETIN N°02

Dear UEMO Members,

This month's bulletin is focused on a variety of EU-related health topics such as the establishment of the European Reference Networks, the battle against child obesity and cancer. Attention is also drawn on new technologies and how they are transforming healthcare.

Mention is also made to UEMO election as a member of the HTA Network Stakeholder Pool, its position in favor of the revision of the Audio-Visual Media Directive, and the the recognition by the UK GMC of GPs as specialists.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue!

Yours sincerely,

Aldo L'UPO

UEMO President

EU NEWS

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EU NEWS

EUROPEAN REFERENCE NETWORKS: CONNECTING MEDICAL TEAMS ACROSS EUROPE FOR THE BENEFITS OF PATIENTS.

16TH FEBRUARY 2017



European
Reference
Networks

On 1 March the newly established European Reference Networks (ERNs) will officially start their activity.

European Reference Networks (ERNs) are virtual networks which gather healthcare providers across Europe to tackle complex or rare medical conditions that require highly specialised treatment and a concentration of knowledge and resources. They were created under the EU Directive on Patients' Rights in Healthcare (2011/24/EU), which also makes it easier for patients to access information on healthcare thus increasing their treatment options.

In practice, ERNs will develop new innovative care models, eHealth tools, medical solutions and devices. They will boost research through large clinical

studies and contribute to the development of new pharmaceuticals, they will ensure a more efficient use of costly resources, which will have a positive impact on the sustainability of national healthcare systems, and for tens of thousands of patients in the EU suffering from rare and/or complex diseases and conditions.

The ERNs will be supported by European cross-border telemedicine tools, and can benefit from a range of EU funding mechanisms such as the "Health Programme", the "Connecting Europe Facility" and the EU research programme "Horizon 2020".

Speaking to doctors, patients and the media at the University hospital in Leuven Belgium on European Rare Disease Day, Vytenis Andriukaitis, European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, concluded: "These Networks will connect the considerable EU knowledge and expertise that is currently scattered between countries, making this initiative a tangible illustration of the added value of EU-collaboration. I am very confident that ERNs can light the way for rare disease patients, leading them to potentially life-saving and life-changing breakthroughs".

ERNs are subdivided into 24 thematics, bringing together over 900 highly specialised healthcare units from 26 countries. They will start working together on a variety of conditions, from bone disorders to hematological diseases, from pediatric cancer to immunodeficiency. Such a gathering of EU's best expertise on this scale should



benefit every year thousands of patients with diseases requiring a particular concentration of highly specialised healthcare in medical domains where expertise is often missing.

Because rare disease are more complex and tend to afflict small and scattered patient populations, the system of ERNs that is being established can bring real added value to rare disease patients. ERNs are designed to ensure that medical practitioners have access to state-of-the-art knowledge so that they are better informed to make decisions on how to adapt treatment and care methods. This in turn contributes to improvements in clinical outcomes and the quality of life of people diagnosed with a rare disease.

Find out more:

- ❖ The Directive on Patient's Rights in Healthcare is available [here!](#)
 - ❖ [Click here](#) to access the official ERNs page !
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EUROPEAN COMMISSION & MALTESE PRESIDENCY JOIN FORCES TO TACKLE CHILD OBESITY

22nd FEBRUARY 2017



The European Commission jointly with the Maltese Presidency recently presented a report to help public authorities implement healthy food standards in schools.

The report, entitled “Public procurement of food for health: technical report on the school setting”, was presented at a meeting on future strategies to address childhood obesity and constitutes a tool for establishing clear specifications on foods and good services to be procured with the objective of facilitating the procurement of healthy foods by school authorities and ultimately reduce child obesity.

The report supports the EU High Level Group on Nutrition and Physical Activity (HLG) and the Action Plan on Childhood Obesity 2014-2020. Its specification sheets are based on recommendations from national school food policies, mapped across the EU in 2014 by the Joint Research Centre



The report sees many benefits that could potentially result from the application of this report including improved quality of school food service, minimisation of health inequalities, positive effects on school attendance and performance, development of health-minded schools, and perhaps the most important of all and the purpose for which the report was drafted, reduce incidence of childhood obesity.

The report also provides a framework to make the application of these guidelines easier and emphasises that businesses within the European social foodservice market could also be rewarded for providing nutritionally-balanced meals and food products and looking for innovative ways to improve public health, the report said.

Finally, the report highlights the central role played by member states at the local level to address the issue of child obesity by encouraging healthy eating habits. It is stated that: "Considering the amount of time that children spend at school, as well as the fact that in many European countries students consume at least one daily main meal there, schools are an ideal environment for supporting healthy behaviours."

Find out more:

- ❖ The full report is available [here](#).
 - ❖ EU action plan on Child Obesity 2014-2020 downloadable [here](#)
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CANCON GUIDE: GUIDELINES FOR EFFECTIVE CANCER CONTROL IN THE EU

10th FEBRUARY 2017



European Guide on Quality Improvement in Comprehensive Cancer Control

On 10/02, CANCON published a document which suggests guidelines on how to improve cancer control in Europe. The guide is the result of a three-year effort by top experts in 25 countries and 126 partner organisations

These have been working together in an EU co-funded joint action, known as CANCON, for European Guide on Quality Improvement in Comprehensive Cancer Control Guide.

The CANCON guide focuses on the quality improvement of cancer. It emphasizes the importance of the patient's experience, care and health services organization, delivery and accessibility, says Tit Albrecht, the coordinator of Cancon joint action.

Overall, the document states that besides saving money and time, effective cancer control increases quality of life. Currently some 2.6 million people in Europe are diagnosed with cancer annually. But more and more cancer patients are overcoming the disease. Therefore greater attention needs to be given to access to care, early diagnosis, rehabilitation, and survivorship.



The good practice recommendations in the Guide strive to improve the national situations. The Guide is meant for decision-makers and cancer care professionals in Europe.

The document includes a detailed survivorship care plan and evidence-based recommendations on cancer screening programmes for the member states of the European Union. This is the main outcome of the joint action.

The Guide has been officially launched at the Cancon Final conference, 14-15 February in Malta. The recommendations. This high-level conference included a panel of European Health Ministers, and discussion on challenges in cancer policy at EU level.

The implementation of these recommendations is the next step. CANCON president insisted that this guide should not be just another book on the shelf.

Cancon is a joint action initiative, co-funded by participating institutes, organisations, universities and health care units, and the European Union. It started in 2014 and ended on 23 February 2017. Besides the Guide, the joint action will publish five policy papers on cancer.

Find out more:

- ❖ The full version of the CANCON guide is accessible [here!](#)
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ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE ON THE RISE IN THE EU

21st FEBRUARY 2017



Bacteria that have evolved to resist widely used antibiotics pose an “alarming” threat to public and animal welfare in Europe, according to a new report.

The warning comes from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and shows high levels of antimicrobial resistance in bacteria found in humans, animals, and food across Europe.

In particular the scientists point to “extremely high” multidrug resistance in a type of Salmonella that causes illness in humans.

The summary report is based on data on antimicrobial resistance several types of bacteria submitted by 28 European Union (EU) member states in 2015 and jointly analysed by scientists from the ECDC and the EFSA.

It provides an overview of resistance in Salmonella isolates from humans, food-producing animals (pigs and calves), and their meat. It also includes Campylobacter isolates from humans and pigs; and Escherichia coli isolates from pigs, calves, and their meat. Data on the incidence of methicillin-resistant



Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) in pigs, calves, and their meat are also included.

Antimicrobial-resistant bacteria causes an estimated 25,000 deaths in the EU each year. The findings, while hardly new, suggest that not enough is being done to tackle the problem.

“Antimicrobial resistance is an alarming threat putting human and animal health in danger,” Vytenis Andriukaitis, EU commissioner for health and food safety, said in an ECDC press release. “We have put substantial efforts to stop its rise, but this is not enough. We must be quicker, stronger and act on several fronts.”

In reviewing the report Marta Hugas, head of EFSA’s biological hazards and contaminants unit, noted geographic variations across the European Union, with countries in northern and western Europe generally having lower resistance levels than those in southern and eastern Europe and said this was most likely due to differences in the level of use and overuse of the medicines.

“In countries where actions have been taken to reduce, replace and re-think the use of antimicrobials in animals show lower levels of antimicrobial resistance and decreasing trends,” she said.

Find out more:

- ❖ The summary report is accessible [here](#).
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NEW TECHNOLOGIES: HOW THEY ARE TRANSFORMING HEALTHCARE

14th FEBRUARY 2017



The European Heart Journal (EHJ) has published a collection of articles addressing how smartphones and computer programmes are transforming healthcare.

Called ‘eHealth’, it includes smartphone applications that can predict a patient’s worsening heart failure from the sound of their voice, or an app that warns someone walking down a street that blood pressure or glucose levels are dangerously low.

Professor Jeroen Bax, president of the European Society of Cardiology (ESC), said: “Our profession and its use of electronic information is changing rapidly. Cutting-edge technologies are providing medical insights like never before.”

The ESC has representatives working with the European Commission’s Expert groups on eHealth to ensure the interests of cardiovascular professionals and their patients are well represented.

Professor Martin Cowie, professor of cardiology at the National Health and Lung Institute at Imperial College London, and co-ordinator of the ESC eHealth Unit, said remote access and personal monitoring would enable heart patients to gather their own data.



He concluded: “eHealth is truly a revolution for health and healthcare. It’s one of the most exciting changes we have seen in decades. It can help empower a person living with a medical condition. People don’t have to go to hospital to receive input. They can collect information at home or even when they are out and about pursuing their daily activities and those data can help doctors make better and more timely decisions with them.”

Find out more:

- ❖ The articles are accessible [here](#). (for a fee)
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UEMO NEWS

UEMO BECOMES MEMBER OF THE HTA NETWORK STAKEHOLDER POOL

17TH FEBRUARY 2017



In February UEMO became an official member of the HTA Network Stakeholder Pool.

Health Technology Assessment (HTA) is a way of assessing the ways science & technology are used in healthcare and disease prevention. It covers medical, social, economic, and ethical issues and provides policy-makers with objective information, so they can formulate health policies that are safe, effective, patient-focused and cost-effective.

The European network for health technology assessment (EUnetHTA) is a network, established to create an effective and sustainable network for health technology assessment (HTA) across Europe that could develop and implement practical tools to provide reliable, timely, transparent and transferable information to contribute to HTAs in members states.

The overall strategic objective of the network is to connect public national/regional HTA agencies, EU



institutions, research institutions and health ministries, enabling an effective exchange of information and support to policy decisions by the Member States.

EUnetHTA consists of a total of 68 organisations (38 Associated Partners and 30 Collaborating Partners) from 28 EU member states plus Norway and Switzerland. As part of the EUnetHTA governance structure, the HTA Network Stakeholder Pool has been formed to ensure a transparent engagement with a broad range of stakeholders: representatives from patient and healthcare consumer organisations, healthcare providers, payers (statutory health insurance) and the industry.

UEMO looks forward to actively participating in future discussions and to supporting initiatives that strengthen the role of HTAs with the aim of generally improving the quality of life of patients.

The next meeting of the HTA Network is set up for 29 March 2017 in Brussels.

Find out more:

- ❖ The content and objectives of the EUnetHTA activities are laid out in detail in this [document](#).
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REVISION OF THE AUDIO-VISUAL MEDIA SERVICE DIRECTIVE

12th FEBRUARY 2017



UEMO has welcomed the revision of the current Directive 2010/13/EU emphasizing that it provides an opportunity to address the impact that the marketing of unhealthy food and drink products has on the dietary patterns of children and young people.

The revision of the Audio-Visual Media service Directive was initiated as a consequence of the current shift from traditional TV from online media. Because the regulatory burden is much heavier on TV, the directive introduced flexibility when restrictions only applicable to TV are no longer justified. At the same time, it ensures that consumers will be sufficiently protected in the on-demand and Internet world. This is done while making sure that innovation is not hindered. The idea is “to achieve a balance between competitiveness and consumer protection.”

It has been largely demonstrated that the vast majority of children and young people are not meeting the dietary guidelines. Too much saturated fat, added sugars and salt, not enough fruit, vegetables or fibre, not enough oily fish



all contribute to an unhealthy eating pattern which is strongly associated with the development of obesity, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and some forms of cancer.

General Practitioners and Family Doctors routinely deal with the chronic, complex conditions caused by these diseases, which in turn impacts on funding of health care resources. The marketing of alcohol to young people has a significant effect on the onset, amount and continuance of drinking habits and current self-regulatory codes of practice do not afford sufficient protection.

UEMO strongly believes that the kind of information available on the media has a direct impact on people's habits. Therefore, the regulation of the directive should be done in a way that encourages better dietary habits and more generally, towards a healthier lifestyle.

Find out more:

- ❖ More info about the directive and its regulation available [here!](#)
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UK GENERAL MEDICAL COUNCIL SUPPORTS LONG-OVERDUE RECOGNITION OF GPs AS SPECIALISTS

1st FEBRUARY 2017



The General Medical Council (GMC) recently issued a statement supporting the expansion of the specialist register to incorporate general practitioners, which would put General Practitioners on an equal footing with other specialists, such as hospital consultants.

The statement, by GMC CEO Charlie Massey, notes that “GPs make a huge and vital contribution to healthcare in the UK, providing expert care and treatment to millions of patients every year. We accept the recent arguments made by the BMA and RCGP that a single advanced register – for both specialists and GPs – would make this expertise much clearer.”

While this is an important milestone, expanding the specialist register to include general practice will require the UK Parliament to update the Medical Act (which is the piece of legislation which determines the scope of the medical register). UEMO will work closely alongside the Royal College of General Practitioners and the GMC to make this



long overdue change a reality in the near future.

Finally, we would like to thank Dr Mary McCarthy, UEMO Head of UK Delegation and vice-president of UEMO, for her unstinting drive, vision and commitment in leading to this pivotal point.

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