
Patients want better access to healthcare info

There is a need for a shift to a more patient-centred approach to healthcare and, especially, more efficient communication on disease and treatment options for patients, concludes a recent study on patient-organisation members' perception on the state of healthcare. A patient-centred approach aims to integrate the needs and expectations of patients into national healthcare systems, in particular by improving patients' access to treatment and information, ensuring their participation in healthcare decision-making and involvement in policy-making.

The Perceptions of healthcare survey, done for IAPO, the global alliance representing patients of all nationalities across all disease areas, includes input from ten EU member states. The study includes an analysis of the quality of healthcare and identifies the major challenges for improvements of government health-care policies. Patient organisations agree on three needs:

timely access to the best treatment and information;
right to participate in decision at the individual patient level, and;
patient involvement in policy-making.

One of the Pharmaceutical Forum's main issues is information for patients. A multi-stakeholder group is currently working on developing a future EU health information strategy. Specific working groups have discussed, since early 2006, non-statutory information, statutory information and accessibility.

The Commission 2004 communication on patient mobility highlights the need to ensure access to the right information regarding the quality and availability of health services in different member states.

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