
Volume 10, Issue 1 /2008 - News

EAHM Seminar



Our association organised its first seminar on 16 November last, on the occasion of the MEDICA 2007 forum in Düsseldorf. Its theme was carefully selected for its up-to-the-minute nature and its pan-European and cross-border characteristics: hospital quality assessment tools. This general heading was followed by questions in the form of a debate to be initiated: towards a voluntary European accreditation system?

In addition, our previous edition discussed this same theme, in order to prepare our readers to tackle the issue in an informed manner.

This dense and extremely educational seminar was attended by some sixty EAHM members, who not only listened attentively to the high-quality speakers, but also actively participated in the round table discussion that took place in the afternoon.

The seminar opened with a word of welcome from Asger Hansen, chairman of the scientific subcommittee that selected the subject and speakers. He emphasised the necessity for a common European hospital accreditation system, which has already been the subject of a statement from the association following the consultation initiated by the European Commission. This accreditation system would contribute to the structuring of crossborder care that is increasingly present in the current reality of hospitals.

The first speaker, Dr. Charles Shaw, is considered an authority in the field of quality assessments. He painted a thorough picture of the national initiatives taken in this domain in several European countries and of the active role played by various international authorities (WHO, Council of Europe, etc.). He also spent time speaking about the different and complementary motivations of the various players in the healthcare sector: not only the patient who wants to be able to compare European hospitals on a common basis and healthcare professionals whose European recognition of qualifications encompasses a harmonisation of hospital organisation and services, but also insurance companies and governments.

In conclusion, Dr. Shaw expressed his enthusiasm for an initiative coming from an organisation such as the European Association of Hospital Managers in favour of an accreditation system. Such an initiative would respect the principle of subsidiarity and undoubtedly have a better chance of spreading quickly than intergovernmental negotiation.

Professor Vleugels also illustrated this path by describing a large-scale project in a Belgian hospital group to outline a possible future accreditation model.

Dr. Andrzej Rys, Director of the public health department of the DG Health and consumer protection at the European Commission listened to our members' opinions as technical experts on the European hospital situation and communicated the Commission's projects and initiatives on European public health. The Commission aims to provide a legal framework to healthcare services, particularly in a crossborder context, and to finance innovative projects in various domains of public health. You can learn more about the new directive regulating healthcare services and its contribution to hospital accreditation by reading the interview with Dr Rys on page 11.

The afternoon continued with the presentation of quality assessment projects in the Netherlands (Laurens Touwen), Denmark (Dorte Bagger) and Germany (Rainer Hilgenfeld) and an intensive dialogue between all the day's participants and the audience. There is no doubt that everyone came out of the event better informed and mobilised with this new path to be plotted out.

We also note that the Golden Helix Award 2007 ceremony was held that day under the aegis of the German association of hospital managers and two sponsors. The prize rewards innovative patient-oriented projects that aim to improve quality based on data and facts. This 15th edition rewarded a Styrian (Austria) quality development project for treating patients suffering from acute coronary syndrome and a German project on

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quality indicators in the domain of psychiatric care.

Published on : Mon, 4 Feb 2008