

Volume 13, Issue 2/2011 - EU News

Commissioner Dali Believes Innovation is Key for the Hospitals of Tomorrow

John Dalli, European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Policy spoke recently at a dinner debate hosted by COCIR, the European Coordination Committee of the Radiological, Electromedical and Healthcare IT Industry and HOPE, the European Hospital and Healthcare Federation.

The theme of the evening was "Hospitals of Tomorrow" and the discussion centred on how to develop efficient and sustainable hospitals in the future. Addressing the invitees, Dalli emphasised the current healthcare conundrum of the need for cost-effectiveness at a time when more health services are required with limited means. He believes that "rather than spending more, we need to spend better" and use innovative solutions to "deliver better healthcare, to more people, in a more efficient manner in the long term".

Innovation should come from how hospitals are designed, organised and managed. For the Commissioner, coordination is of utmost importance, whether this is the coordination of staff within hospitals or coordination with primary and tertiary care establishments.

Health technology is a key area where Dalli believes hospitals can become more efficient and he celebrates the fact that progress is being made with electronic health records and e-prescribing. However, he expressed concern over the limited use of telemedicine in European hospitals, "very few European Hospitals - not more than eight percent - exploit the potential of telemedicine and telemonitoring". The use of telemedicine can allow hospitals to pool vital resources and go some way into solving the escalating problem of staff shortages.

For Commissioner Dalli the time has come to "unlock the potential" of health technology and develop "intelligent hospitals". Intelligent hospitals are those where patients have access to their own medical data; where doctors and nurses can access medical data and work closely with colleagues and patients regardless of their location; and hospitals that use telemedicine to provide home care or connect to other hospitals.

But how do we do this? How do we create intelligent, innovative hospitals? Dalli recognises that although important, political will is not sufficient. Smart investments are also needed. He discussed the merits of public-private partnerships as innovative financing solutions and stressed that investment is not just a cost but also an investment in the future by investing in people's health today. He encouraged the use of EU structural funds in the reform of national health systems and recognised that there is no "one-size-fits-all" approach but that investments should respond to both national and local needs.

Full speech available at: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/health_consumer/dyna/dalli/speeches_en.cfm

Published on : Tue, 28 Jun 2011