
ICU Volume 8 - Issue 2 - Summer 2008 - News

Europe, Industry, Research

Europe

Survey: EU Doctors Slow to Adopt eHealth Practices

The use of ICT in the healthcare sector is becoming a daily practice, as general practitioners increasingly use computers either to store medical patients' data or assist patient consultation, according to a recent survey.

A report entitled 'Benchmarking ICT use among general practitioners in Europe', one of several EU pilots on eHealth indicators, shows that on average, 87% of European doctors use a computer. Furthermore, 80% of the practices in the 27 EU countries store administrative patient data electronically and computers can be found in 78% of consultation rooms.

However, continues the survey, "there is still room for improvement," notably regarding electronic networks connecting doctors' IT systems with other health actors, the electronic exchange and transfer of patient data and electronic interaction with patients.

The report, which draws on a survey involving some 7,000 general practitioners, points to huge variations in the use of ICT for health across Europe. The study, published on 25 April 2008, names Denmark, the Netherlands, Finland, Sweden and the UK as "the European frontrunners" in eHealth use by doctors. On the other hand, there is "considerable room for improvement" in the use of eHealth in Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Romania. The other member states are considered to be a "large group of average performers".

Doctors were also surveyed on their general attitudes towards ICT and their perception of facilitators and barriers towards a wider uptake of eHealth. According to the results, EU doctors are "quite positive" about ICT's potential to improve the quality of healthcare services. As for boosting the further spread of eHealth, they think that the its inclusion in the curricula of medical education, more IT training for general practitioners and the existence of a clinical information network for all health actors could help.

Research

Naturally-occurring Protein May Be Effective In Limiting Heart Attack Injury And Restoring Function

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Medical College of Wisconsin researchers in Milwaukee have shown for the first time that thrombopoietin (TPO), a naturally occurring protein being developed as a pharmaceutical to increase platelet count in cancer patients during chemotherapy, can also protect the heart against injury during a heart attack.

The study, led by John E. Baker PhD, professor of pediatric surgery in the division of cardiothoracic surgery, was published in the January 2008 issue of Cardiovascular Research. The importance of these findings was underscored in an accompanying editorial.

Currently there are no therapies available to directly protect the heart against the damaging effects of a heart attack. Dr. Baker's team has shown that administering a single dose of TPO to rats during a heart attack decreased the extent of permanent muscle damage to the heart and increased the ability of the heart to function afterwards, when compared with no drug treatment. Additionally, they found that a single cardioprotective treatment with TPO did not increase platelet count. This novel finding suggests the cardioprotective actions of TPO are separate from its ability to increase platelet count.

Dr. Baker has submitted a US and worldwide patent application on the tissue protective properties of TPO. Dr. Baker's discovery is licensed to Cardiopoietis, a Wisconsin LLC, formed to develop drugs for the treatment of heart attacks.

TPO is a hormone, which is naturally produced by the liver and kidney. Dr. Baker's investigative team had previously shown that erythropoietin, a

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protein and pharmaceutical currently in clinical use to treat anemia in end-stage kidney disease, protects the rat heart against injury during a heart attack. They found that although erythropoietin and TPO have separate functional roles, there were similarities in the structures of the two proteins that suggested TPO may have protective properties similar to erythropoietin.

"We hypothesized that a single treatment with TPO during a heart attack would be sufficient to protect the heart from injury," says Dr. Baker. "Our results suggest that TPO directly protects the heart and may represent a novel approach for the treatment of acute heart attack."

The study was supported by a grant from the National Institutes of Health, National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute.

Industry

Respironics Launches the PerforMax™ ICU Mask

Patient interface is recognized to be a key determining factor for the success of Non-invasive ventilation.

Respironics is pleased to announce the European launch of the PerforMax™ ICU mask.

The PerforMax™ is designed on an innovative unique technology to address the high-acuity patients in the most critical situations.

The PerforMax benefits are:

- Intuitive fit in emergency and acute applications
- Non traumatic sealing
- Demonstrated ventilation efficacy

These benefits result from the custom contour design, innovative headgear system, large silicon cushion and interchangeable swivel elbow for greater ventilator compatibility.

The PerforMax™ ICU mask complements the existing product line of ventilation solutions, increasing the value for medical staff and their patients in the continuum of care.

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