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European Hospital and Community Pharmacists issue Joint Statement on Future Pharmacist Roles

The two organisations representing community and hospital pharmacists in Europe have come together to make a declaration on the development of the pharmacy profession.

The joint statement by the Pharmaceutical Group of the European Union (PGEU) and the European Association of Hospital Pharmacists (EAHP) is entitled "The Role of the Pharmacist in Optimising Patient use of Medication" and represents a call to action to national governments to, firstly, enable pharmacists to increase their role in optimising patient use of medicines, and, secondly, to improve the systems supporting multiprofessional care across Europe.

EAHP and PGEU believe that pharmacists, as experts in medicines, should be at the heart of national strategies to ensure best outcomes for patients. This includes pharmacists educating patients about the optimal use of their medicines, and helping to ensure that potential polypharmacy problems, which can arise when a patient takes multiple medications, are satisfactorily resolved and reconciled.

The development of these roles for pharmacists is especially relevant in view of Europe's ageing population, combined with the pressures on public spending that are likely for the foreseeable future. In this sense, it has never been more important to ensure national spending on medicines achieves intended outcomes in a cost-effective manner.

Pharmacists, in both community and hospital settings, are uniquely placed to facilitate this, so long as health policy makers recognise the opportunity and make the necessary commitments to its achievement.

Finally, the joint statement also highlights the need for multi-professional approaches to healthcare delivery to ensure integrated and seamless patient care. This includes improving systems for communication between health sectors when a patient transfers between hospital and community (and vice-versa), especially in relation to situations where changes are made to a patient's medication.

The two organisations believe that the main barriers preventing closer cooperation between settings and disciplines in the health sector are:

- Insufficient commitment to the goal of multi-professional care from health service management and national/regional policy makers which often leaves patient needs unmet;
- Lack of existing interventions that support and promote professional trust and collaboration between different professionals involved in patient care;
- Difficulties in the transfer and collection of relevant information (e.g. access to patient medical records); and
- Lack of practice precedent or individual professional experience of multi-professional team working, which creates unnecessary tension between professionals.

PGEU and EAHP call for commitment from Governments to achieving multi-professional care, and for the integration of the multi-professional team concept within health professional education curriculums. Speaking on the publication of the statement, Dr. Roberto Frontini, EAHP President said: "The joint statement by EAHP and PGEU represents our shared goals in maximising the benefits the health service derives from pharmacists' expertise in medicines. More than ever before decision makers in the health sector must ask and answer important questions about improving value and the outcomes achieved for patients. The pharmacist's positive role in ensuring optimal use of medicines by patients is therefore a central consideration to successfully meeting the challenges of today and tomorrow."

Ms Isabelle Adenot, PGEU President said: "While patients receive primary care as well as hospital-based care, European pharmacists practise in both settings and share the challenge of improving the rational use of medicines. Having a common roadmap can help them to progress. This is the purpose of our joint statement."

For more information on the statement and the organisations, please visit: www.eahp.eu, www.pgeu.eu

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