European Parliament Commits to Improving Patient Safety

The European Parliament has adopted a report backing measures to reduce the number of infections in hospitals. These measures include support for research into this area, better education and information for both patients and staff and also the recruitment of specialised nurses.

Patient safety has always been of great concern in the hospital environment; hospital acquired infections (HAIs), medication-related events and complications during or after operations are prevalent in European hospitals. In order to combat these sometimes easily avoidable problems, MEPs are being asked to approve a draft Council recommendation on patient safety. The report was drafted by Amalia Sartori (EPPED, IT) and was adopted with 521 votes in favour, six against and five abstentions.

MEPs have called for a 20% improvement in patient safety by 2015. A 20% reduction of "adverse events" equates to 900,000 less cases a year. At the present moment, according to statistics from the Commission, between 8 and 12% of patients (meaning 6.7 to 15 million inpatients per year) admitted into European hospitals experience these "adverse events."

These problems stretch well beyond the hospitals. It is reported that 37 million primary care patients are also affected by these "adverse events" through the treatment they receive.

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