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National News



Austria

Report Reveals Poor Diet Among the Young

Vienna - The rising incidence of conditions such as obesity and bulimia have served to highlight the poor eating habits of young people in the Austrian capital. The problem is most pronounced among students aged between 14 and 24 years.

Some 6% of girls in this group are classified as "very underweight," while 13% of their male counterparts fall within the "obese" category. The figures are detailed in the 2002 Health Report on Young People in Vienna, which was commissioned for the first time last year by the health planning division of the municipal authority and compiled by the Institute for Research on Young People. In addition to probing the current health status of Vienna's younger citizens, the 237-page study provides revealing insights into drug use, nutritional habits, sexual behaviour and mobility.

Vienna's Population Becoming Healthier

Vienna - The population of the Austrian capital is living longer. This is one of the principal findings of a major investigation carried out last year and published in December. The 2002 Health Report for Vienna also found that in the decade spanning the years 1989 and 2000, the average life expectancy of a citizen of the city increased by 3.6 years for men and 2.6 years for women. In addition, life expectancy for babies born in the city in 2001 now stands at 80.7 years for girls and 75 years for boys. The most common cause of death by a significant margin is heart and circulatory disorders, which account for some 54% of deaths, followed by cancer, which is the principal factor in almost a quarter of deaths (24%). The revelation that the city's incidence of cancer is actually in decline is a notable for the fact that it bucks international trends in cancer rates. In 1999, Austria as a whole showed an annual decrease of 5.7% in the incidence of cancer. The strong disparity between the sexes persists, however, with mortality rates from cancer among Austrian men nearly 39% higher than for their female counterparts.



Germany

MBAcourse in health management Hanover - Beginning in March, the Medical University of Hanover will for the first time offer students an opportunity to study health management. The university's international MBA programme has been established within the framework of the new Hanover School of Health Management (HSHM). As well as traditional subjects such as clinical care and home care, the curriculum offers modules in the areas of medical research and the biosciences. The HSHM course lasts 22 months and consists of three teaching modules. The programme will benefit from a partnership agreement with the GISMA Business School and the Krannert School of Business Administration at the Purdue University in the US state of Indiana. For course details, contact; Professor Matthias P. Schönermark,

Tel.: +49 511 5323341.

Health reform proposals due in April Berlin - German Health Minister, Ulla Schmidt, has announced her plans to lay comprehensive health reform plans before parliament in April. A commission of experts drawn from across the health system and currently drawing up proposals for far reaching reform of the social welfare system is expected to report back to the Minister in the same month. Headed by a senior academic, Bernd Rürup, the group's primary job is to deliver a set of proposals, which will keep a lid on health expenditure and stabilize income for the health

system. Since the beginning of the year, hospital staff and doctors have been at the forefront of a concerted campaign of protest against the Minister's decision to impose a spending freeze on hospitals and doctors' surgeries.

EU Wide Patient Chip Card to Counter Fraud

Munich - Recent estimates put the cost of fraudulent use of insurance chipcards in southern Germany alone at €1.2 billion. According to Manfred Richter- Reichhelm, the head of the German Federation of Public Health Insurers (Kassenärztliche Bundesvereinigung - KBV), "there is a flourishing trade in chipcards and fraud is widespread." Fraudulent use of the cards ranges from using the card of a deceased public patient in order to obtain certain medicines to patients lending their cards to privately insured family members or visitors from abroad. According to the KBV both practices are commonplace. In order to stamp out the problem, the federation has called for the introduction of a Europe-wide "fraud proof chipcard" which would require using photographs of the holder.

Public Rights to Choice in Medicine Purchases

Cologne - The welfare tribunal of the state of North-Rhine Westphalia has ruled that insurance companies can no longer require their members to buy prescription medicines on-line from foreign companies that offer cheaper deals. The court in Essen was dealing with a case brought against an insurance company from Cologne, which insisted that members order their medicines on the Internet from a mail order business based in the Netherlands. The court found that the insurance companies' right to achieve cost savings is subordinate to legally protected rights of citizens in the area of public health.

France

Marseilles Hospitals to Get €2.4 Billion Over 20 Years

Marseilles - The administrative council for public hospitals in Marseilles (APHM) has adopted a €2.4 billion restructuring plan for the city's hospitals. The 20-year programme aims to bring the hospitals of the Mediterranean port into line with the latest developments in medicine. The plan also envisages rationalising the five existing hospitals on three sites covering the northern, southern and central divisions of the city. The AP-HM employs 16,000 medical and nursing staff and has an annual budget of some €850 million.

Paris Wants Hospital Accreditation Accelerated

In early February France's Minister for Health, Jean-Francois Mattei, called for the process of evaluation for the country's hospitals to be accelerated. The Minister's impatience at the pace of accreditation was expressed in a letter to Alain Coulomb, the new Secretary General of the *Agence nationale d'accréditation et d'évaluation en santé* (ANAES). ANAES is the organization established as part of the reform of the nation's social welfare system in 1995 and charged with issuing external certification on the quality of institutions providing health services. Mattei told Coulomb that ANAES should be performing in the region of 1,000 to 1,200 evaluations of recognised hospitals each year. In 2002, the agency performed just 500 such evaluations and its target of 600 hospital accreditations in 2003 has been described by the health minister as totally inadequate.

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