

Volume 9, Issue 5 /2007 - News

News Members

Internet

Internet users can now have access to their own medical file on the Internet. Thanks to the HealthVault site, proposed by Microsoft, patients can manage and store their own medical records. Financed by targeted ads, the site contains a search engine and specialised tools with which patients can, for instance, control their weight or the evolution of their condition. Microsoft officials claim that the confidentiality of sensitive data will be strictly guaranteed.

This new service puts Microsoft in the lead, before Google, which will soon launch a similar application called Google Health. The software will provide the user with alert messages for prescription renewal or medical appointments, as well as information on local doctors.

More than half of American adults regularly search the Internet for health information.

France

The French Senate recently released a report aimed at reducing the number of doctors where they are overrepresented and developing telemedicine in order to enhance access to healthcare in areas lacking doctors.

To this end, the report proposes not only to improve information on aid provided to doctors who practice in remote areas, but also to impose financial penalties, such as reduced consultation fees, for doctors opening a practice in an area where health professionals are already overrepresented. This latter measure is fiercely criticised by medical trainees, who are organizing demonstrations throughout France to protest it.

Spain

The new health minister, Bernat Soria, has given details of his plans for the next six months, which include a joint conference with the ministry of education to match jobs in the health sector to the needs of the Spanish public. He announced a human resources study for the nursing sector, together with more opportunities for resident doctors, and medical students in Spanish universities.

He also mentioned increasing possibilities in Spain for doctors from other countries, but only when they meet the requirements of the Spanish health service.

Belgium

The largest Belgian consumers association has proposed the formulation of precise guidelines about patient information in hospitals, after establishing that most hospitals do not systematically provide written and exhaustive information about potential risks, existing options and expected outcomes of tests or operations. For instance, in the case of hip prosthesis, details about pros and cons according to the type of prosthesis, side effects, possible complications, success rates, durability of prostheses, alternatives... are often missing or incomplete. One fourth of Belgian hospitals volunteered to participate to this study.

To fill the information void, Belgian hospitals are encouraged to put together brochures on as many surgical procedures as possible, review them annually, appoint in each hospital a patient information coordinator, submit new brochures to a patients panel, and promote cooperation between hospitals around basic and common documents, according to the association.

United Kingdom

NHS trusts hygiene

More than a quarter of NHS trusts in England failed to comply with the hygiene code brought in by the government to combat superbugs in hospitals and doctors' surgeries. 70% of primary care trusts failed to ensure patients got a choice of four NHS or private hospitals for surgery or

treatment. Most trusts admitted the failings, but inspectors identified 12 where senior managers signed a declaration saying they were complying with national standards on infection control. They were later discovered to have breached the rules.

Published on : Mon, 24 Dec 2007