

Volume 12, Issue 1 /2010 - Editorial

Reorientation of EAHM

The year 2010 will be important for EAHM. Firstly, the 23rd EAHM congress in Zurich entitled "Roadmap to Top Quality" will allow us to continue our work on this theme. During the 2007 seminar in Dusseldorf we made this the central point of our work. This was the starting point for the development of European standards of quality for hospitals. The next congress will see its continuation thanks to our participation in a working group with other similar organisations from across Europe.

During the 2010 congress the mandates of the current Presidency and Executive Committee will end. It is time to make an assessment, to identify the perspectives for the next four years and to develop the three principal themes. As well as the question of quality already mentioned, we are also committed to the question of managing a hospital or "corporate governance". Following the investigation and the proposals opened by the theoretical research of Prof. K. Eeklo (KULLouvain, Belgium), this issue remains a top priority for our scientific committee.

During last year's EAHM seminar in Dusseldorf, the speakers presented their experiences and gave their opinions on the different aspects of the privatisation of hospitals (please see our seminar report pg. 7-9). The choice of this theme was not a coincidence: we must demystify the term "privatisation". This is what Prof. Maarse did in describing the different forms and various contents it covers. The other speakers told of their experiences, underlining the risks of hospital services turning exclusively to the profitability of healthcare, especially concerning the offer of funds to the most socially vulnerable patients. If we want to follow the rules of "corporate governance", a strategy geared towards a profit should be clearly stated in the hospital's mission. Like in all companies, the strategies and therefore the management should be inspired by the principles and values of the hospital.

Beside the Board of Directors who determine the mission of the hospital and establish the framework and resources, it is the responsibility of the hospital manager and his team to lead the day to day management. It is here he plays an important role. Given the evolution of patient expectations and the consistent decrease in financial resources, the manager and his team must make decisions that could have ethical and social implications. They could for example, make a selection of services based solely on profitability. This shows just how well balanced a hospital manager needs to be. This task has already changed and is in constant evolution.

This reasoning brings us to EAHM's action plan for the next four years. During the General Assembly, our President, Paul Castel announced the decision by the Executive Committee to start a new reflection group. This group will be in charge of developing proposals aiming to concretise EAHM's objectives in relation to the evolution and the demands imposed on hospitals and their managers. It is important that it keeps the spirit of EAHM as a professional organisation tasked with orientating its services in function of the needs of its members including information, knowledge and the sharing of experiences.

A successful change in direction comes from the bottom up, from national association members to management bodies. Emphasis must be placed in particular on the needs of young and future colleagues. We must give them the necessary professional tools to ensure that in the future, our hospitals will be able to offer patients the best treatments. Moreover, the reflection group will develop these proposals, which, after consultation with the national associations, will be considered as priorities in our work programme. Your ideas and suggestions are from now very welcome.

Willy Heuschen

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Editor-in-Chief

Published on : Mon, 1 Mar 2010