**16. European Health Forum Gastein, 2 – 4 October 2013**

**European Health Award 2013: Six shortlisted projects with a patient-centred focus**

*Six cross-border health projects have now been short-listed for the prestigious European Health Award 2013. They cover topics such as air pollution; enhancing cross border healthcare; patient involvement in improving quality of care and health research; prevention of healthcare associated infections; information dissemination on novel psychoactive substances, and improving patient-doctor communication and patients´ understanding of their medical conditions. The prize-winner will be chosen by a panel of leading health experts, and the award presented at the European Health Forum Gastein in early October.*

**Bad Hofgastein, August 22, 2013** – Six cutting-edge projects are in the running for the prestigious €10,000 European Health Award 2013, sponsored by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Health and FOPI, which brings together Austria's research-based pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies. The winner will be chosen by a panel of leading health experts, and announced during the 16th EHFG conference, being held in the Gastein Valley from the 2nd to 4th October.

The European Health Award honours projects and initiatives aiming to improve public health or health care in Europe. Important criteria are that more than one European country should be involved in the project, that the results are transferable to other states, that the project addresses a significant health threat and that it directly benefits a substantial portion of the population or relatively large patient groups.

“The point of this award is to encourage not just intelligent, workable initiatives but ideas that lend themselves to effective trans-national cooperation,” Prof Helmut Brand, President of the International Forum Gastein, said today. “At this year’s European Health Forum Gastein the focus is on how we can best ensure that our future health systems are adaptable, responsive and open to new approaches and ideas. The European Health Award contributes to this theme by rewarding and highlighting projects that are original, timely and breaking new boundaries in their attempts to improve health in Europe.” The European Health Award, together with the European Health Forum Gastein (EHFG), is aimed at encouraging such an approach. “In healthcare there is always a risk of making short-sighted cuts instead of managing overlaps and inefficiency. The shortlisted projects have identified problems of healthcare delivery or significant threats to population health, and are directly addressing issues such as efficiency, quality of care and access to care that are so important to ensure our health systems are resilient and innovative” explained Prof Brand.

The European Health Award was established in 2007 by Honorary President and EHFG founder Prof Günther Leiner. Prof Leiner stressed that promoting trans-border cooperation in health policy had been a key motivating factor behind establishing the award: “Today it has become even more urgent. The challenges are now even more multifaceted and complex. They are compounded by demographic developments and by austerity measures introduced due to the financial crisis. Promoting a cross-border agenda in health policy, multi-country working and the development of transferable initiatives has never been more important,” Prof Leiner said.

Last year's award went to HLS-EU – the European Health Literacy Project, that organised the multi-country European Health Literacy Survey, founded the international network ‘Health Literacy Europe’ and established national advisory boards on health literacy in eight countries to address the overall cultural, social and political impact of health literacy. In 2011 the award went to the Child Safety Report Cards, a pioneering system for monitoring and reducing injuries to children.

**The 2013 short-list in detail:**

**1. The Aphekom Project: Improving knowledge and communication for decision-making on air pollution and health in Europe** [**www.aphekom.org**](http://www.aphekom.org)

Despite reduced levels, air pollution still causes serious health problems in Europe. And gaps remain in stakeholders’ understanding of this threat, impeding planning and implementation of measures that better protect our health. To bridge these gaps, the 3-year, EU-funded Aphekom project calculated the health impacts and monetary costs of air pollution in 25 European cities. It assessed the additional increase in chronic diseases from living near busy roads. And it estimated the health and monetary benefits of implementing EU legislation to reduce sulphur content in fuels. Out of a desire to turn science into action, the findings were conveyed in plain language tailored to users’ needs so decision makers can set more-effective local and Europe-wide policies; health professionals can advise vulnerable groups better; and individuals can modify their behaviours.

*Participating countries: The Aphekom project was conducted in 25**cities in 12 European countries, including Austria, Belgium, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Ireland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the UK.*

**2. epSOS (Smart Open Services for European Patients) - making healthcare better** [**www.epsos.eu**](http://www.epsos.eu/)

epSOS attempts to offer seamless healthcare to European citizens by designing, building and evaluating a service infrastructure that demonstrates cross-border technical as well as semantic interoperability between electronic health record systems in Europe, with an initial focus on both patient summary/emergency data sets and medication record/ePrescribing solutions. epSOS will enable healthprofessionals to access the medical information of a foreign patient in their own language, from the comfort of their own eHealth system. Key goals are to improve the quality and safety of healthcare for citizens when travelling to another European country~~,~~ and for citizens that regularly work or study in another country (e.g. citizens living in a border region). epSOS can make a significant contribution to patient safety by reducing the frequency of medical errors and by providing quick access to documentation. In emergency situations, this documentation provides the medical personnel with life-saving information and can reduce the (sometimes needless) repetition of diagnostic procedures.

*Participating countries: 25 different European countries, including: Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, The Netherlands, Turkey, UK.*

**3. European Patient Ambassador Programme (EPAP)** [**www.EPAPonline.eu**](http://www.epaponline.eu/#_blank)

**The European Patient Ambassador Programme is a self-learning programme giving patients and carers the essential skills needed to interact with healthcare professionals, policymakers, researchers and journalists.** The importance of patient and carer involvement in improving the quality of healthcare services and research has been increasingly recognised in recent years. However, patients and carers may not be aware of the different ways they can be involved, or how to make their involvement more effective. In addition, health policy-makers and professionals may also experience difficulties in engaging or accessing people who want to become involved, as well as providing suitable training for these people. EPAP provides solutions to both these problems. It firstly introduces patients and carers to some of the skills and knowledge they may need to successfully represent themselves and others. Secondly, it will create a bank of suitably trained patient ambassadors across Europe with experience of a diverse range of conditions, which health service providers and policy makers can engage with for their particular purposes. EPAP is unique in this respect and holds great potential.

*Participating countries: at the time of writing 152 patients from 17 different European countries are signed up to the initiative.*

**4. Interreg IVA Project “EurSafety Health-net”, euregional network for patient safety and infection prevention** [**www.eursafety.eu**](http://www.eursafety.eu/)

EurSafety Health-net focuses on the prevention of health care-associated infections (HCAI), which together with antimicrobial resistance (e.g. MRSA, ESBL, VRE) are today one of the most important infectious disease threats in the European Union (ECDC, Stockholm, July 2007). The importance of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) as a factor which increases mortality and morbidity of communicable disease for patients in European member states has been expressed by the Council Resolution (1999/C195/01) on antimicrobial resistance claiming a strategy against the microbial threat. The rate of antimicrobial resistance differs greatly between countries in Europe, reflecting different outcomes of different infection prevention policies, and creating a barrier to cross border patient healthcare. In addition, the harmonisation of healthcare quality with respect to HCAI and AMR is necessary as from October 2013 the EU-directive on cross border healthcare will come into force. The cross border exchange of knowledge and harmonisation of quality of healthcare with respect to patient safety and infection prevention is the main focus of EurSafety Health-net. Project activities include the development and implementation of a border-wide German-Dutch healthcare quality network; the development and implementation of regional competence centres; education and training of healthcare professionals and active public awareness activities in the whole German-Dutch border area together with a region in Belgium for the prevention of infections and improved patient safety.

*Participating countries: Belgium, Germany, The Netherlands.*

**5. ReDNet project: new and rapid forms of identification and dissemination of evidence-based information on novel psychoactive substances (NPS) among vulnerable individuals** [**www.novelpsychoactivesubstances.eu**](file:///C:\Users\roth\Downloads\www.novelpsychoactivesubstances.eu)

The Recreational Drugs European Network (ReDNet) is a multicentred project, funded by the European Commission (Grant agreement no: 20091216), based in eight EU countries, aimed at identifying new psychoactive substances sold online and improving the information stream to vulnerable individuals, especially young people and professionals working with them, via a range of innovative technological tools. The recent emergence of novel psychoactive substances (NPS), or ‘new drugs’, combined with the ability of the internet to disseminate information quickly, have raised a number of concerns in the fields of drug policy, substance use research, and public health across the EU and internationally. Despite increasing amount of attention being given to this area, these new emerging products, often unregulated and sold online as ‘legal’ and ‘safer’ alternatives to traditional illicit drugs, are rarely mentioned in scientific literature, and there is limited information available on their nature and potential risks. Such a phenomenon has posed unprecedented challenges to global public health and there is therefore an urgent need to develop new approaches to identify their emergence, to inform and to develop cutting-edge preventative measures.

*Participating countries: Belgium, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Norway, Poland, Spain and UK.*

**6. “Was hab’ ich?” gemeinnützige GmbH (“What’s my diagnosis?”)** [**www.washabich.de**](http://www.washabich.de)

Was hab’ ich?” is an online platform where volunteer medical students explain medical reports to patients – anonymously, individually and free of charge. The overall aim of “Was hab’ ich?” is to foster a common understanding of a medical condition between doctors and patients in order to promote healing. The new patient generation has come of age and wants to understand their condition, take responsibility for their situation, and participate in the decision-making process concerning their treatment. Moreover “Was hab’ ich?” sensitises doctors and medical students on the issue and relevance of doctor-patient communication while providing training to all medics involved in the project. Thus, in the long term, “Was hab’ ich?” not only supports patients directly through the “translation” of their reports, but trains doctors and future doctors to become better communicators. Founded in early 2011, “Was hab’ ich?” has developed to become a network of almost 1,000 medics who have translated more than 14,000 medical reports to date. Currently, the team consists of over 600 active team members from almost 40 universities in at least five different European countries.

*Participating countries: Austria, France, Germany, Hungary and Switzerland.*

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