EAHP: A 5 point plan for meeting the challenges of an ageing society

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The European Association of Hospital Pharmacists (EAHP) has published a new policy statement highlighting the important role of hospital pharmacists in meeting the pan-European challenge of an ageing society.

Unanimously approved by delegates of EAHP's 34 member country associations, the statement identifies five main areas for policy attention:

- ▶ Increasing the uptake of medication reconciliation and review by hospital pharmacists as a key response to polypharmacy;
- ▶ Additional training for all relevant healthcare professionals in respect of the particular care needs of older patients;
- ▶ Further embedding of inter-sector communication and multi-disciplinary working as critical approaches to meeting the health system challenges of an ageing society;
- ▶ Regulatory innovation to improve the participation of older patients in clinical trials;
- ▶ Improvement in best practice sharing and adoption across Europe to ensure the internal health system challenge of an ageing health workforce is successfully met.

Commenting on the statement, EAHP President Joan Peppard remarked:

"In the first instance, Europe's ageing society marks a great achievement by our health and social systems, that so many people are living longer and healthier lives. However we recognise the challenges that are emerging, and one of these is multimorbidity with the connected issue of polypharmacy.

It really must be emphasised to policy makers everywhere that there is a health-care profession ready and equipped to assist. As the policy statement we publish today makes clear, the evidence in favour of hospital pharmacist led medicines reconciliation and review in reducing over-prescription and helping older patients manage their medicines is evident. However, as the results of EAHP's recently

published surveys of practice make clear, there is work still to be done to ensure patients get access to the clinical pharmacy services they deserve.

When health system managers think of the ageing society challenge, they should think multimorbidity, think polypharmacy, and think of the hospital pharmacist services that can be further leveraged with their support. Solutions exist, and one of them is called the hospital pharmacist."

'LEADERSHIP' THE WORD ON HOSPITAL PHARMACISTS' LIPS AT VIENNA CONGRESS

The theme of hospital pharmacists as leaders was thoroughly explored during a packed three-day EAHP Congress in Vienna 16th to 18th March 2016. Hospital pharmacists as the driver for change in such areas as patient empowerment, combatting antimicrobial resistance, the enhancement of multi-disciplinary teams, and the introduction of new technologies was examined in speeches, seminars and workshops.

The Congress opened on the theme of patient empowerment, with a duet of a hospital pharmacist and a patient presenting further developments in the model of patient centred care that has taken place in Canada. Marie-Claude Vanier (hospital pharmacist) and Vincent Dumez (chronic disease patient) outlined how much healthcare professionals can learn from listening to the experiences of patients, as they are the health system experts on living with an illness.

A Synergy Satellite highlighted the role of hospital pharmacists in educating fellow healthcare professionals, payers and patients about biological interchangeability. With many new biosimilars coming to market in the future it is the expertise of the pharmacist as a source of reliable advice that will make the difference. Elsewhere, a record number of students registered for the Congress and took part in a dedicated programme on pharmaceutical care. Another Synergy Satellite examined the role of Ready to Use Drugs as a useful option for patient safety.

At the end of the Congress Armando Alcobia Martins from Portugal was awarded the 1st prize for poster submissions for his work on 'Double checking

manipulations for complex and/or high risk preparations'. The EAHP-EPSC Student Science Award was presented to Slovenian Rok Barle for his manuscript on the control of chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting in patients with gastrointestinal tumours.

Speaking after the Congress, EAHP President Joan Peppard remarked:

"With 3,500 attendees from 73 countries registered for the event, the EAHP Congress is firmly established as the leading educational congress for hospital pharmacists in Europe. Our Scientific Committee has overseen another top class event covering so many issues of high public interest, such as combatting antimicrobial resistance, introducing new technologies, and fostering truly better partnerships with patients and other healthcare professionals.

The leadership message came across loud and clear and as we all return to our places of practice, the onus is on our profession to take up these challenges and for health system managers to support these improvements."

EAHP JOINS EUROPEAN COMMISSION MHEALTH ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES GROUP

The European Association of Hospital Pharmacists (EAHP) has been accepted as a member of a European Commission working group developing assessment guidelines for mHealth applications in the European Union.

EAHP Board Member Robert Moss will lead the Association's representations within the group, supported by the policy mandate given to EAHP by its members' policy statement of 2014. The statement recognises both the opportunities, as well as the potential threats to patient safety, represented by the uptake of mHealth applications in the sphere of medicines use. To meet the risks, Europe's hospital pharmacists called for appropriate regulation mechanisms for apps that involve medicines use, and for the advice of hospital pharmacists to be taken into account within regulatory processes.

The European Commission has now set up the working group to develop guidelines for assessing the validity and reliability of the data that health apps collect and process. Based on their expertise, 20 members representing civil society, research and industry organisations were selected to participate in the working group. The guidelines are expected to be published by the end of 2016.

Commenting on EAHP's participation in the process Robert Moss said:

“Hospital pharmacists are the secondary care sector’s experts in medicines and medicines use, and is a profession that takes patient safety as fundamental to its mission. We’re therefore delighted to be contributing to the pan-European oversight mechanisms required to deliver mHealth innovation safely. Hospital pharmacist insight on medicines risk can

help protect the welfare of patients from sources of potential harm that may otherwise remain unseen. Its important for hospital pharmacists everywhere to engage in the mHealth agenda on this basis.”

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