CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS IN A NEW FIELD: CAPTURING PATIENT FEEDBACK

The European Commission is keen to involve as many interested parties as possible in its attempts to examine the use of tools to capture patient feedback, especially web 2.0 tools, and look at how they may be used both to empower patients and improve the safety and quality of care for future patients. If you or your organisation feel(s) that you can add value to this debate, please contact us via sanco-patient-feedback@ec.europa.eu

Background

Improving the **quality of healthcare** is a shared priority objective among EU Member States. The quality of healthcare can be regarded as a combination of **safety**, **clinical outcome** and **patient experience**. Giving patients the opportunity to feed back on those aspects could help to achieve two major health aims: (i) to allow the patient to become more empowered and (ii) to use the feedback to drive up the safety and quality of care for future patients.

Patient empowerment is increasingly seen as a vital component of a modern patient-centred health system. The European Union recognises its value, underlined in the **European Union Health Strategy, "Together for Health**", with its principles and objectives that serve to guide EU health policy for the years to come. As Health Commissioner Vassiliou stated on Patients' Rights Day in April 2009, patient empowerment is seen as a **benefit for all patients in all health system**s, regardless of how these systems are organised.

Steps have been taken in many EU Member States to empower patients through a range of tools, including improving the information patients are given, allowing them to be an active partner in care decisions and facilitating the use of greater patient feedback.

Feedback can include views on the **safety of care received, levels of dignity of, and respect for, the patient and his/her family, the type and amount of information given to the patient, patient involvement in decisions about treatment, environmental factors such as cleanliness and food quality, and the clinical outcome of the healthcare received.**

There is early evidence that patient-reported experience is a good marker of quality of care. On the basis of the available data so far, the Commission believes that the use of patient feedback mechanisms, particularly web 2.0 tools, should both empower citizens and help healthcare policy-makers and providers to improve quality and safety of care. We also want more research to be carried out to establish more concretely the relationship between patient feedback and safety and quality outcomes.

In recent years, advances in technology have seen the growing use of electronic means of capturing and using patient feedback on the healthcare they have received, in particular **web 2.0 tools** which enable real-time, interactive engagement. To this end, a web 2.0 tool which has been developed and is currently being used by some healthcare providers in one EU Member State to capture and act upon patient feedback, was presented to a meeting of the **patient safety and quality of care working group** in Brussels in April

2009. Other web 2.0 tools are in use in some Member States too. Working Group members, including Member State representatives and organisations representing patients, health professionals, healthcare management and healthcare quality assurance bodies, showed some interest in this topic as an area for potential further EU attention.

A role for the EU

It is for Member States to judge how best to capture and use the experiences of patients and their families to improve healthcare on their territories. Community action **can encourage cooperation between the Member States and lend support to their action.** We hope to **bring together Member States' experiences and best practice** in this area so that all EU patients can potentially benefit from web 2.0 feedback tools.

Through this initiative, the Commission can also support civil society in its engagement with healthcare providers at local and regional levels. E-health solutions identified through this initiative could help to efficiently and effectively communicate patient experience to providers in all Member States.

Among the **key questions** which could be addressed at the EU level, are:

- Why is capturing patient feedback important in the delivery of 21st century healthcare?
- Is patient experience a good indicator of patient safety and healthcare quality outcomes?
- What are the main tools and methods being used to capture that feedback?
- What advantages can web 2.0 tools bring to capturing patient feedback?
- What are the weaknesses of web 2.0 feedback tools which need to be overcome?
- How should patient feedback captured through web 2.0 be used in practice to improve the quality of EU health systems, including the safety and quality of care?
- How is that improvement measured?
- How could patient feedback indicators play a role?
- Where is the EU level added value in this area?
- How could the achievement of the EU added value best be taken forward?

This list is by no means exhaustive. The views of patients, policy-makers, healthcare providers and other interested parties are most welcome.

Deliverable

A **toolkit of, or guidance on, good practice** of capturing and using patient experience through web 2.0 tools could be **developed at the EU level and made available to healthcare providers and citizens by the end of 2010**. The development of the toolkit could be coordinated by the Commission, in partnership with Member States, patient groups and other interested parties. The aim would be to produce a tool by the end of 2010.