

Press Release



Is the Belgian patient empowerment overstated? Average position in European Patient Empowerment ranking raises questions

Brussels, the 31st of March 2009

Belgian patients are far from the most empowered in Europe, according to the report "Empowerment of the European Patient - Options and Implications" published today in Brussels. In this ranking Denmark comes first, followed by Germany and Finland. Belgium is no 13.

The top ranked countries are a good mix of Western and Central and Eastern European countries. The report finds that in patient empowerment not only money matters – instead the issue is about will and the perception of whom the healthcare system really aims to serve! This means that the ranking puts Belgium with mediocre healthcare information well behind for example Hungary, Slovenia and Slovakia.

What needs to improve in Belgium?

Financial incentives and the right to choose is generally well provided for in Belgium. Today's report tells that Belgium patients need to access understandable information about healthcare and medicines, from more sources than their doctor or pharmacist. A national provider catalogue with quality ranking is an obvious expectation in order to facilitate the choice among doctors and care providers. 24/7 healthcare information system on the web or via phone should be an obvious step towards a more patient-friendly healthcare.

This would ensure that patients can become truly active partners in healthcare – quite essential today to ensure good results in healthcare. Test Achat Santé is fine – but far from enough! A register of legit doctors would be a good start!

With regards to medicines a look into the Swedish information site www.fass.se might be useful. Here Swedish citizens can learn about their prescribed medicines. This system even provides rapid alerts via SMS or email if the authorities or medicines producers learn about problems previously unknown.

The Patient ranking groups 18 indicators of empowerment into four categories: Patients' rights, Information, Health Technology Assessment (HTA) and Financial incentives. Each sub-discipline is weighted for importance to provide the overall score of max 1000 points.

The individual category leaders were as follows:

Patients' rights: **Switzerland**

Information: **Denmark**

Health Technology Assessment (HTA): **Denmark** and the **UK**

Financial incentives: **Belgium, Germany** and **Switzerland**

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For more information, the report and the matrix: www.healthpowerhouse.com

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