Euro Health Consumer Index 2013:

British Healthcare ‘amongst the poorest of Western European countries’

Significantly higher spending in NHS Scotland makes little difference to performance

Brussels, November 28, 2013

The NHS urgently needs further reform if it is to match the services offered by Western Europe’s leading health systems. Both English and Scottish healthcare provision lags behind the performance of most Western European countries. The two UK systems sit ahead of the former Central and Eastern European countries but languish behind most Western European countries. Only those countries hit hard by the financial crisis – Italy, Spain, Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Cyprus – performed worse. These were the findings of an annual study published today, the Euro Health Consumer Index (EHCI) 2013, examining the performance of 35 national healthcare systems in Europe.

The Netherlands comes out best, followed by Switzerland, Iceland, Denmark, Norway and Belgium. The Netherlands scored 870 of maximum 1000 points. However, NHS Scotland and NHS England scored only 719 and 718 respectively. Importantly, for the first time the Index measures NHS Scotland separately from the rest of the UK.

For the first time, England and Scotland measured separately

Dr. Arne Björnberg, chairman and head of research for Health Consumer Powerhouse (HCP), which conducted the research, said; “Scottish healthcare spends around 10 % more per capita than in England, with the evident Scottish problems regarding cardiovascular disease, alcohol and other lifestyle factors as one possible explanation. But even against this background, there are few significant differences in performance. This demonstrates that healthcare delivery is not simply a matter of money”.

Among the 48 indicators used, the English and Scottish performance is identical in 36.

Dr. Björnberg continued; “The Dutch system is cost effective in the areas it does best, while the Scottish example shows you can spend a lot more money without having much impact.” He added “There is room for reform. There is clear evidence social insurance based systems are superior. They regularly outperform centralised tax-funded systems in the EHCI. The clear majority of the top-performing healthcare countries are insurance-based, such as the Netherlands, Switzerland, Belgium, Germany and France.”
Crisis impact

For the first time the first EHCI was launched in 2005, there is now a clear gap in healthcare provision between the affluent, financially strong parts of Europe and the less affluent, crisis-struck countries. Although treatment results such as cancer and infant survival keep improving all over Europe, there are almost no medium-income countries in the top half of the Index in 2013.
About the Euro Health Consumer Index (EHCI)

The EHCI has established itself as the “industry standard” of modern healthcare monitoring since the start in 2005. The 2013 edition ranks 35 national European health care systems on 48 indicators, covering six areas that are essential to the health consumer: Patients’ rights and information, Accessibility of treatment (waiting times), Medical outcomes, Range and reach of services provided and Pharmaceuticals. The 2013 Index has now introduced Prevention as a new area, with eight indicators.

The EHCI is compiled from a combination of public statistics, patient polls and independent research conducted by HCP Ltd. The study has been supported by unrestricted grants from Pfizer Inc, USA, Medicover S.A., Belgium, and New Direction Foundation, Belgium.

The EHCI material is published on the HCP website: www.healthpowerhouse.com. It is freely available and anybody is welcome to quote it, referring to the source. For questions and information, please contact:

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About the Health Consumer Powerhouse

The Health Consumer Powerhouse (HCP) is a Sweden-based research company that monitors and compares healthcare systems among 35 countries, including all EU member states as well as Canada. The studies are funded by unconditional research grants from stakeholders and by co-operation with the European Commission.