Press Release

26.06.2006

Bleak performance by UK in the European Union consumer friendly healthcare contest

The Euro Health Consumer Index 2006 says UK healthcare “is under important changes but mediocre overall performance is still the characteristic”

The Euro Health Consumer Index, the annual survey of EU healthcare, makes United Kingdom healthcare no 15 among the public healthcare systems. In the survey of 26 European countries, the Brits are served by a healthcare system excelling in consumer information but with bleak overall performance. The 2006 Index winner is France. Close followers are the Netherlands (winner in 2005), Germany and Sweden. The 2006 Euro Health Consumer Index was launched today in Brussels. Care consumers have now the chance to send their opinion to their governments.

In five categories, covering 28 performance indicators, UK scores 436 points out of a potential 750. That puts UK at level with Hungary and Portugal. The UK healthcare system is at the top regarding patient rights and information with a patient ombudsman, provider catalogue with quality ranking (no other country offers this service), web or 24/7 telephone healthcare information. Weak spots were the lack of right to a second opinion, no direct access to specialist care, generally long waiting times for planned treatments, high level of breast cancer mortality, MRSA infections in hospitals, slow deployment on novel cancer drugs and dental care excluded from the public healthcare offering.

“UK still is a mediocre overall performer but good on heart problems”, states Dr. Arne Björnberg the Euro Health Consumer Index Director. “UK is the European star on healthcare information! The new Freedom of Information Act will hopefully improve score on openness indicators”.

What should be done in United Kingdom?

As a result of the Index findings the Health Consumer Powerhouse (HCP), the Index provider, has suggestions for each country how to empower the healthcare consumer and improve the system. For the United Kingdom, the action points are:

- Get the MRSA infections under control
- Ensure the right to second opinion
- Cut waiting times
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Call for action:

From the www.healthpowerhouse.com consumers all around Europe can send a message to their Ministry of Health on what actions to be taken. Consumers can choose to send our recommendations as well as/or their own personal remarks. This is the first time that health consumers cross Europe are invited to participate in a campaign to reform European healthcare systems in a consumer friendly direction.

About the Index

The Euro Health Consumer Index is the annual ranking of national European healthcare systems across five areas that are key to the consumer: patients’ rights and information, waiting times for common treatments, care outcomes, the generosity of the system and access to medication. It was first published in 2005. The Index is compiled from a combination of public statistics and independent research. The Index is produced by the (Brussels-based) analysis and information organisation Health Consumer Powerhouse. The Index takes a consumer-centred position.

To view/download the 2006 Index and the explanatory report: www.healthpowerhouse.com/ehci

About the Health Consumer Powerhouse: www.healthpowerhouse.com

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