

Pharmacy practice in a European perspective

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In 1992 European pharmacy organisations joined in the EuroPharm forum. This network has for the last two decades focused on development of pharmacy practice. Today 30 associations from 22 countries are members of the Forum.

The mission of the EuroPharm Forum is to improve health in Europe according to priorities set by the WHO. A very close relationship to WHO Europe is therefore essential to the EuroPharm Forum.

Many member countries have contributed to the professional work, to the benefit of all members. In the beginning, there was a need for guidelines to pharmacy practice work, and the work of the EuroPharm Forum - eg on asthma, smoking and diabetes - was well accepted and used as a basis for national work in many member countries. Another important aspect of the EuroPharm Forum work was the twinning projects where more developed countries twinned with countries with emerging health systems in order to improve pharmacy practice. WHO Europe funded part of the work while the remaining funding came mainly from the developed countries.

Today the activities of the Forum match the development and wide variety of

members' situation. The latest initiative is a knowledge and search facility for pharmacy practice development. The Observatory is a webpage, www.europharm.pbworks.com, where pharmacy practice-interested people can start discussions and search for relevant pharmacy practice papers. The aim is to constantly develop and expand a site where all pharmacy practice materials can be found and discussed. The Observatory is located on a public homepage and welcomes all relevant contributions.

Since 2002 the EuroPharm Forum has collected information about pharmacy practice activities among its members. This information is published each year in the Country Database. Data from the database is used to inspire, make contracts and exchange experiences. The Country Database is located on a members-only webpage.

As mentioned above, the core activity of the Forum was in the past to develop tools like model programmes, reports, guidelines,

analyses, etc. The latest activities in this area have been a study carried out by the EuroPharm Forum Working Group Pandemic Influenza which resulted in the report: "The Role of the Pharmacist in Fourteen National Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Plans in Europe; an Analysis", which was released a few months before the pandemic influenza exploded. A guide prepared by the EuroPharm Forum Working Group on Quality of Medicines resulted in a "Framework for a Guide on counterfeit medicines for pharmacists", and latest the EuroPharm Forum supported the work of the Hungarian National Committee of Pharmaceutical Care on a "Metabolic Syndrome Pharmaceutical Care Programme". All materials can be found on the EuroPharm Forum website.

An important part of the EuroPharm Forum's work is to support the implementation of pharmacy practice activities. The cd-rom toolbox is an interactive education tool providing a step-by-step approach to developing national implementation plans for professional programmes. Generalised from the EuroPharm Forum pharmacy-based service programmes, the cd-rom has been designed to stimulate and support practicing pharmacists, health professionals, universities and pharmacy schools as they disseminate and implement best practices in any type of public health services.

The cd-rom toolbox collates all the EuroPharm Forum model programmes and includes four central elements, i.e. a fictive case study, a real case study, the Forum guidelines and instruments, and country materials. The toolbox is mainly designed for practising pharmacists, decision-makers and pharmacy group managers, but is applicable for any practising health professional.

Almost every year EuroPharm Forum conducts one or two conferences. The subjects of the conferences are rooted in the professional agenda of the EuroPharm Forum at the time of the conference. This fall a conference on "The role of pharmacists in individual patient care" will take place in Copenhagen.

More information on the EuroPharm Forum can be found through the web pages. At the moment, the EuroPharm Forum hosts and maintains three web pages: the EuroPharm Forum homepage, www.europharmforum.org, the members-only Discussion For, and the Observatory. It is also possible to subscribe to the Newsflash which updates on the EuroPharm Forum business and pharmacy practice in general.