

6. European Health Forum Gastein "Health & Wealth"

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Blood transfusions: EU enlargement makes uniform standards and controls more important

Actual press releases and photos at
www.ehfg.org/pressecenter/2003

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Jean-Marie Vlassembrouck from the pharmaceutical company Baxter and the Austrian Secretary of State for Health Reinhart Waneck together with representatives from the Czech Republic, Poland and Romania debated on uniform European standards concerning blood donations and medicines made from plasma after the EU enlargement.

EU sets high standards for blood products

"Blood transfusion is a difficult topic", said Vlassembrouck, "article 152 of the Treaty of Amsterdam guarantees high standards of quality and safety concerning human substances." There is in particular a big demand for medicines made from blood plasma.

For Waneck the common objective is "the access to safe and reliable blood and blood products". "Austria is a model pupil for the candidate countries", said Waneck. In Austria there are currently twelve blood banks and 14 plasma centres whose blood donations are regularly checked by the PIC/S, the Pharmaceutical Inspection Convention. 26 members from 3 continents participate in this Convention. It is important to achieve a common product quality, says Waneck.

Regional blood should be used only regionally

Petr Turek from the Czech Ministry of Health is sceptical about a boundless exchange of blood: "Products coming from local sources should be also used." In the Czech Republic blood banks are still distributed among many small centres, e.g. local hospitals. He looks favourably upon common EU standards but: "The donations should be labelled in national languages and there should be established separate plasma pools because of the diverse geography and epidemiology (this deals with the spread of communicable and non-communicable diseases and their consequences for mankind)."

Magdalena Letowska, director of the Centre for transfusion-medicine in Poland, confirmed the safety of Polish blood products: "In Poland a law on uniform standards

of blood products was enacted already in 1997." The distribution of donations is carried out centrally, according to Letowska. She says that there are 21 regional centres and the number of donators has increased in the previous four years.

Blood reserves hardly available in Eastern Europe

Daniel Lighezan, Vice President of the Romanian Society for Haemophilia, says: "The EU enlargement will make the availability and affordability of blood products more important; In Romania there are for example not enough donators to have sufficient blood in stock.

"For us it is important to be supported by the EU and concurrently also be controlled", said Lighezan.

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