



## **Better trust in health information is key to creating choice, empowerment**

- **Independent review may ease public concerns**

Bad Hofgastein, Austria, October 4 -- Experts today agreed that public trust in the quality of available health information must be strengthened in order to help empower patients and citizens to make more informed decisions about their own healthcare needs. New mechanisms that use independent review and appraisal may have potential to enhance public confidence in information.

In a recent global survey of 192 patient organizations conducted by PatientView, 60% of these groups said the most important goal of publicly available healthcare information is to enable patients to make informed decisions about their healthcare and treatment.\* Yet many patients also felt currently available information to be largely unreliable. Information could be improved by ensuring that it is easy to understand, transparent with regard to data sources and vested interests, and based on scientific evidence.

Independent review and accreditation of health information might also present a way to increase confidence in publicly-available information. In England, the Department of Health has initiated discussions on the development of a National Information Accreditation Scheme (IAS), which is due to be implemented next year. It's hoped that the IAS will help patients recognize good quality information and make more informed decisions about their health, and support health professionals to deliver good care.

Accreditation mechanisms may also serve to widen the scope of available information. In Switzerland, the non-profit Swiss Pharma Quality Association (SPQA) has designed a multi-stakeholder mechanism with an independent audit board to guarantee the reliability of information found on pharmaceutical company websites. Such accreditation mechanisms may be a practical compliment to existing government regulation of publicly available information. In the PatientView survey, over 60% of patient groups said pharmaceutical companies should be allowed to supply information directly to the public under specific circumstances, and particularly if the patient requests it.

However, accreditation alone is not sufficient to address the issue of public mistrust. There is little empirical evidence to show the impact of accreditation and quality marks on health improvement, and past efforts have run up against challenges with uptake, and cost of participation. Some feel accreditation is a paternalistic approach which limits access to information.

In discussions, participants called for more cooperation between stakeholders, especially patient and consumer groups who have traditionally had different views on how to improve access to patient information. Progress requires action and dialogue at both the national and European level.

\*For more information, see [www.patient-view.com](http://www.patient-view.com)

**EHFG – Press Office**, Mag. Thomas Brey, [info@mbdialog.at](mailto:info@mbdialog.at)  
Tel.: + 43 (0) 64 32 / 3393 / 237, Mobile: +43 (0) 676 / 542 39 09

**Further press information on the EHFG can also be found at [www.ehfg.org](http://www.ehfg.org)**