



More Safety for Medical Information from the Internet

- **First quality label for electronic pharmaceutical information documents responsible handling of sensitive data**
- **Swiss pharmaceutical industry assumes vanguard role throughout Europe and certifies the industry's first websites**

Two thirds of all patients in Western Europe seek therapy-relevant information on the internet and more than half of consumers expect to new medical information on the web. This poses new challenges to pharmaceutical companies, but also opens up new opportunities. This was an important topic at the European Health Forum (EHFG) taking place from 4 to 7 October in Bad Hofgastein.

The figures show that health information taken from the internet is of growing importance for patients as well as experts – provided the content is safe and of high quality. An internationally exemplary project has been initiated in Switzerland and presented at the EHFG. After completion of a quality audit, five pilot companies - Menarini, Lundbeck, Novartis Pharma Schweiz, Merck Sharp & Dohme-Chibret, Novartis Pharma Schweiz and Takeda – have received the first so far only European quality label for “reliable, confidential and safe internet information” in the pharmaceutical industry.

The Swiss Pharma Quality Association (SPQA) was established for the quality label. The president of the non-profit organization, Hans Seiler, emphasizes the comprehensive basis for granting the label: “We take into consideration the fulfilment of legal conditions, norms and standards, the content of the information, how it is presented as well as regulations from the area of information and communication technology.” The quality label is granted by an independent institution for two years. In addition to this, random checks as to whether the quality standards are fulfilled on a steady basis are carried out continually.

The SPQA label guarantees internet users that the information presented on the web is correct, balanced and current and that it fulfils all regulations of Swiss Data Protection Law and voluntary obligations in the industry within the scope of the Swiss Pharma Code. For pharmaceutical companies which feature this quality label on their websites, the certification also has a series of important advantages. The quality label is now recognized as proof of honest communication with patients and contributes to the fact that patients are more likely to make use of the original information than information from a third party.

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Additional press information on the EHFG and pictures can be found at www.ehfg.org