



Healthcare System Needs Binding Set of Accepted Principles

- **EHFG President Günther Leiner demands broad-based discussion of ethical issues**
- **Medical progress without set of accepted ethical norms leads to social conflicts**

Modern healthcare systems are increasingly confronted with controversial ethical issues. Scientific progress and the aging of the population in industrialised nations play a particular role in this regard: scientific progress is creating an increasing number of medical options, while the aging of the population has led to a considerable rise in the demand for medical services.

“Values in Medicine – From Vision to Reality” is therefore the key theme of the European Health Forum Gastein (EHFG), the most important health policy event in the EU. The event is taking place for the 11th time from 1 to 4 October this year in Bad Hofgastein.

“Medicine can do more than ever, we need more medical services than ever, and therefore the question of how to pay for it is more urgent than ever,” EHFG President Günther Leiner said at the opening plenary session of the European Health Forum Gastein. “This alone raises ethical and moral questions for which there are no simple answers and which frequently plunge those employed in the healthcare industry into major moral conflict.”

Thus it is necessary for society in general and healthcare policy in particular to embrace these issues. This is a task which is at least as important and urgent as medical research. Leiner: “Medical advance without generally accepted ethical values and norms will not improve our lives, but lead to social conflict and inequality instead.”

Austrian Health Minister Andrea Kdolsky pointed out that it is necessary for the health policy debate to go beyond the current issues of the day: “For years the value of health has had a prominent position in the discussions, whether in policymaking, in the media or in public discourse. At the forefront are issues concerning the ability to finance the continually increasing range of services as well as new technologies which are to some extent related to ethical questions as well as fears. The consequences for health policy resulting from the progressive aging of society raise questions about the organisation of future health policy. In an era in which short-term solutions must be found for many specific factors it is necessary to orient our view toward a longer-term perspective and the system in its entirety.

One of the most important challenges in Austrian as well as European and international health policy is the promotion of health and prevention. For this reason I am looking forward to the first forum today, which is devoted entirely to preventive thinking. For me the aim is to develop a national overall strategy for prevention.”

Plenary

State Secretary Dr. Klaus Theo Schröder of the German Ministry of Health pointed out in his opening speech on the subject of values and health: “The values of universality, quality, general access and solidarity play a central role in the health policy of the European Union. The practical implementation of these values will be best achieved by developed healthcare systems of the individual member states. Only with the bundled strength of all 27 countries in the EU will we achieve the reality of best possible care.”

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