



In this issue:

- **Achieving Efficiency in the Health Care Sector through ICT?**
- **Healthcare innovation to prevent exploding costs?**
- **Virtual Physiological Human Network of Excellence calls for papers by 1 May 2010**
- **Employment and Social Affairs Council reaches agreement on directive against injury from needles and other sharp instruments**
- **Industry pushes for better conditions to develop telehealth in Europe**
- **Transforming research into new products**
- **EU Commissioner for research pushes for 3% of GDP target on research**
- **Health in the Seventh Framework Programme for research – collecting themes in preparation of future call of proposals**
- **5 May 2010: Conference on social and health benefits of balanced diet in Brussels (reminder)**
- **5 – 9 May 2010: 7th International Congress on Autoimmunity, Ljubljana, Slovenia**
- **Nathalie Moll appointed as Secretary General of Bioindustries**



Achieving Efficiency in the Health Care Sector through ICT?

A new study provides some added value to the debate on how to best use the new information and communication technologies in health care. This research was co-financed by the Directorate General for Health and Consumers of the European Commission. It focuses on 6 OECD countries', namely Australia, Canada, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, and the United States. Results show varying degrees of success deploying health ICT solutions.

Advice is given on the range of policy options, conditions and practices that policy makers can adapt to their own national circumstances to accelerate adoption and effective use of these technologies. Findings illustrate the potential benefits that can result from ICT implementation in the following fields: Increasing quality of care and efficiency - especially for chronic diseases, reducing operating costs of clinical services, reducing administrative costs and enabling entirely new modes of care.

In general the case studies cast no doubt on the potential ability of countries to make major progress toward key policy goals such as improving access to care in remote areas. The study also reveals that the establishment of privacy protection is vital for its development. Further to that monitoring and evaluation have to be strengthened; governments shall hence support the development of reliable and internationally comparable indicators to benchmark ICT adoption.

For further information:

<http://www.ehealthnews.eu/publications/latest/1933-achieving-efficiency-improvements-in-the-health-sector-through-the-implementation-of-information-and-communication-technologies>

Healthcare innovation to prevent exploding costs?

eHealth is now among the top priorities of the European Commission and also included in the new EU 2020 strategy as part of creating growth and jobs. In December 2009, health ministers promised to help creating an environment where eHealth can flourish and the Spanish EU Presidency pledges to make ehealth a "top priority" for 2010. Telemedicine is believed to decrease costs by treating people at home while using up to date remote monitoring devices.

eHealth is considered to offer new products even if markets are primarily considered within countries with already well developed health services. A drawback to innovation might come through public authorities being concerned on costs, for example through interoperability between IT systems. Even the industry complains that investment in research and development is pointless if there is no market for their innovative products.

To better balance innovation and costs rigorous Health Technology Assessment (HTA) shall be introduced. To this end the European Commission wants to strengthen HTA at national level. Main aim is to avoid duplication and share expertise and develop common tools for assessment. €6 million shall be granted for joint action in 2010 and 2012 involving 24 EU member states as well as Norway and Switzerland.

Concerning the development of new drugs, the EU launched in 2007 the Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI), a public-private partnership between the EU and the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations (EFPIA). IMI supports also projects in the areas of drug safety, knowledge management and education and training.

Some health advocates want to see more joined-up thinking and urge the EU to take a stronger coordination role. Brussels is keen to facilitate communication in this area but remains conscious of subsidiarity rules, which ensure that Member States are responsible for health care.

For further information:

<http://www.euractiv.com/en/health/healthcare-innovation-cost-killer-links-dossier-287514>



Virtual Physiological Human Network of Excellence calls for papers by 1 May 2010

Predicting diseases? To this aim, VPH NoE, the Virtual Physiological Human Network of Excellence, an umbrella project set up by the European Commission with a budget of about 350 million Euros from the Seventh Framework Program, will hold a Brussels based conference in early autumn 2010. The VPH NoE shall deliver a so called 'VPH Vision and Strategy Document' to inform the next calls for the VPH field for FP7, FP8 and for European large infrastructural actions.

Main aim of this initiative is to translate all functions of the human body into a set of multi-scale computer models to develop an integrative approach to predicting the risk in developing a disease and to improving the diagnosis and treatments of diseases.

The meeting on 30th September - 1st October is designed to focus on topics in four main themes: Organ Systems, Modelling Scales, Research Methodology, Application Domains and Data Access and Information Assurance. Submitted abstracts will be selected for inclusion by the VPH 2010 Programme Committee for the following issues: Organ Systems, Neuromusculoskeletal, Cardiovascular, Lymphatic and immunological, Organ-tissue modelling, Tissue-cell modelling, Cell-molecule modelling, Research Methodology, ICT for integrative modelling, Multiscale visualisation and data processing, Application Domains, Systems physiology research, Systems Biology research, Screening, monitoring and diagnosis and more.

For further information and registration, please visit:

<http://www.ehealthnews.eu/events/1950-vph2010-first-vph-conference-call-for-papers>

Employment and Social Affairs Council reaches agreement on directive against injury from needles and other sharp instruments

Injuries from needles and other sharp instruments are one of the most common risks and are among the most serious to which health sector workers in Europe are exposed. Nursing organisations and campaigners estimate that every year, across the EU, up to one million preventable injuries are sustained from needle stick and sharp objects in medical workplaces. These injuries can transmit blood borne infections such as Hepatitis C and HIV.

The European Parliament already adopted a resolution on protecting European healthcare workers from blood-borne infections due to needle-stick injuries in 2006 and put much pressure on the European Commission to move ahead. Now, on 8 March, the Employment and Social Affairs Council succeeded to reach agreement on a directive to ensure maximum workplace safety for health sector workers, offering them protection against injury from needles and other sharp instruments.

The new directive gives legal effect to a framework agreement concluded by employers and hospital and health sector trade unions HOSPEEM, the European Hospital and Healthcare Employers Association and EPSU, the European Federation of Public Service Unions on 17 July 2009 (on which this newsletter reported).

Member states have now three years to transpose the new directive into national law.

For further information:

http://consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/lsa/113230.pdf

Industry pushes for better conditions to develop telehealth in Europe

Developing the sector of telehealth appears to face severe financial and staffing problems, according to the industry. COCIR, an industry group representing the healthcare IT sector, urged the European Commission and Member States to establish a single legal framework to overcome problems such as licensing, liability and cross-border jurisdiction. COCIR published its recommendation in a position paper released in response to a recent Communication of the European Commission on telemedicine (European Commission's Communication COM(2008)689 on telemedicine for the benefit of patients, healthcare and society).

COCIR also recommends more cooperation between healthcare stakeholders to accelerate the adoption of telehealth in routine clinical practice and increased funding for large-scale projects aimed at evaluating the impact of healthcare IT solutions. Apparently not everybody agrees, some doctors claim that an increase in the use of technology might have a disruptive impact on clinical practice.



For further information:

<http://www.euractiv.com/en/health/industry-fears-legal-barriers-telehealth-news-279405>

[http://www.cocir.org/uploads/documents/-40-cocir_position_paper_on_telemedicine -
_17 february 2010.pdf](http://www.cocir.org/uploads/documents/-40-cocir_position_paper_on_telemedicine_-_17_february_2010.pdf)

Transforming research into new products

According to Bernhard Schleich of SusChem, a European technology platform for sustainable chemistry, the fruits of EU research are often not converted into marketable products due to difficulties in funding expensive "demonstration" projects. As most funding opportunities in Europe are still "research-oriented", companies feel alone when it comes to the development phase. This results on the whole in a weak European industrial performance.

He proposes to make EU science funds, such as FP7, to focus more on demonstration projects and coordinate better with the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme. The Commission's forthcoming innovation action plan, due to be published this summer might in his view contribute to a better approach on this issue.

For further information:

<http://www.euractiv.com/en/innovation/research-wasted-demo-projects-face-funding-drought-news-276295>

EU Commissioner for research pushes for 3% of GDP target on research

Máire Geoghegan-Quinn, the EU Commissioner for research, innovation and science, announced at the Lisbon Council's 2010 Innovation Summit in early March that she would absolutely avoid cutting back on research. The target of dedicating 3% of GDP on research and development (R&D) must stay in place. She insisted that now was the wrong time to make cutbacks in a sector that is underperforming in many EU Member States. The target of investing 3% of the EU's GDP in research is part of the new EU strategy for jobs and growth, 'Europe 2020'. Further to that, the innovation Commissioner also wants to see progress on the European patent and new "European Innovation Partnerships," which are also part of the Europe 2020 strategy.

Another objective of Máire Geoghegan-Quinn is to work with Member States to remove barriers to cross-border science initiatives, such as pension and social security issues, and to establish more public-private partnerships.

For further information:

<http://www.euractiv.com/en/innovation/innovation-commissioner-backs-eu-3-research-target-news-319741>

Health in the Seventh Framework Programme for research – collecting themes in preparation of future call of proposals

The health theme within the 7th EU Framework programme on research aims to improve the health of European citizens and to boost the competitiveness of health-related industries and businesses, as well as addressing global health issues. The health theme is a major theme of the Cooperation programme and the EU has earmarked a total of € 6.1 billion for funding this theme over the duration of FP7.

The following issues are considered as a priority for funding: Biotechnology, generic tools and technologies for human health - producing knowledge that will be applied in the area of health and medicine; Translating research for human health - making sure that basic discoveries have practical benefits and improve the quality of life; Optimising the delivery of health care to European citizens - ensuring that the results of biomedical research will ultimately reach the citizens; while underlying child health, health of the ageing population and gender-related health as overarching issues of the Health theme. As translation of basic discoveries into clinical applications is one of the main objectives of this theme, clinical research is expected to be a major tool used in the funded projects.

The European Commission now informed national coordination desks on the preparation for the next call of proposals. The call for proposal will probably be released in summer this year with a deadline in autumn/winter 2010.



Meanwhile, the Commission also asks national coordination desks to help identifying themes for the 2012 work programme under the Health 1 Theme of the FRP 7. Please find attached the questionnaire distributed by the German national coordination desk NKS, which allows specifying preferred research focus for future EU funding. Making up your mind in this phase is essential to ensure the right themes are addressed in 2012 funding.

For further information:

<http://www.nks-lebenswissenschaften.de/service/verteiler#pagetop>

http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/health/library_en.html#01

http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/health/home_en.html

5 May 2010: Conference on social and health benefits of balanced diet in Brussels (reminder)

This sixth edition of the EGEA conference on health benefits of the Mediterranean-Style Diet, will be conducted by Aprifel (the Agency on research and information on fresh fruits and vegetables) with the support of the European Commission and the French Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries. Main theme will be the social and health benefits of a balanced diet with a focus on the role of Fruit and Vegetables among the low income population. Despite the fact that dietary guidelines almost universally encourage increased consumption of fruit and vegetables a large proportion of the population does not meet these recommendations, with a particularly low consumption among socioeconomically disadvantaged groups.

For further information:

<http://www.egeaconference.com/>

5 – 9 May 2010: 7th International Congress on Autoimmunity, Ljubljana, Slovenia

This congress will invoke novel aspects of autoimmunity both in diagnostic, pathogenesis and therapy. The following topics will be addressed: etiology and pathogenesis, infection, genetics, animal models, mechanism, old and new autoimmune diseases, tolerance, novel therapies and biologics, diagnostics, prognosis, hormones, cancer and autoimmunity. This event will attract a high number of physicians and researchers interested in Autoimmunity.

For further information: <http://www2.kenes.com/auto2010/Pages/Home.aspx>

Nathalie Moll appointed as Secretary General of Bioindustries

EuropaBio, the European Association for Bioindustries, has appointed Nathalie Moll as Secretary General. The European Association for Bioindustries, brings together bioscience companies and has 69 corporate and seven associated members, four BioRegions and 26 national biotechnology associations representing some 1,800 small and medium sized enterprises.

For further information: <http://www.europeanagenda.eu/pnews/000001539.php>

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