



Health & Consumer Voice

June 2010

Headline News

Together for Health: a Strategy for the EU 2020 _____ 1

Top Stories

European Consumer Centres help ash crisis passengers _____ 2

EU Veterinary Week 2010 _____ 3

Directive on organs transplantation _____ 3

Public consultation on veterinary pharmaceuticals _____ 4

Shanghai World Exposition 2010 _____ 4

In brief

Scientific opinion on safety of reprocessed medical devices marketed for single use _____ 2

Risks from cords and drawstrings in children's clothing _____ 3

New Commission's video on reduction of health inequalities in the EU _____ 4

Conference on Consumer Complaints _____ 4

Together for Health: a Strategy for the EU 2020

On 29-30 June the European Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Consumers will host the conference "Together for Health – a Strategy for the EU 2020", within the activities of the EU Open Health Forum in Brussels. The EU Open Health Forum is a mechanism for the European Commission to get feedback from stakeholders on the implementation of the EU Health Policy and to identify the need for new policy initiatives at EU level.

The conference will mark an important step towards strengthening the involvement of all stakeholders in contributing to the development and implementation of actions and activities to protect and improve the health of European citizens. The conference's aim is to contribute and increase the profile of health in all policies through discussion between EU policy makers and stakeholders on pressing public health issues and their impacts on the Community.

Building on the progress made through structures as the EU Health Forum, the European Commission will work closely with stakeholder groups, and with regional and local level bodies with a view to optimising their contribution to the implementation of the EU health strategy.

The EU Health Strategy aims to deliver concrete results in improving health. As set out in the Lisbon Treaty, the EU has a unique role to improve and protect health and in addition to



facilitate cooperation on health. Given Member States' responsibilities in health at national, regional and local levels, and the need to respect subsidiarity, all stakeholders must be closely involved in the implementation of the strategy. To that end, health in all policies is also about involving new partners in health policy. The European Commission will develop partnerships to promote the goals of the strategy, including with NGOs, industry, academia and the media.

In addition, the on-going process within the EU 2020 strategy demonstrates the importance of health in all policies: EU citizens must be key partners in constructing the strategy and are able to play a key role in delivering the objectives which were laid down.

Registration for the EU Open Health conference is welcome from all interested parties and/or organisations from the broader community of interest in EU health policy.

For further information and registration, please go to:

http://ec.europa.eu/health/interest_groups/eu_health_forum/open_forum/2010/index_en.htm#fullwidth



In brief



Scientific opinion on safety of reprocessed medical devices marketed for single use

The Commission's independent Scientific Committee on Emerging and Newly Identified Health Risks (SCENIHR) published its opinion on the safety of reprocessed medical devices marketed for single-use.

A single-use medical device (SUD) is a device intended to be used once only for a single patient. Examples of SUDs are single-use syringes and needles, catheters and breathing tubes.

The Directive (93/42/EEC) regulating the placing of medical devices on the EU-market distinguishes between devices that are intended for reuse and those intended for single-use only. However, the practice of reprocessing SUDs is not regulated at EU-level and legislation in Member States differs. A few countries allow the reprocessing of SUDs, others prohibit the practice and some have no specific legislation.

The Commission asked the Scientific Committee on Emerging and Newly Identified Health Risks (SCENIHR) to assess whether the reprocessing of SUDs may constitute a hazard for human health.

Although clinical data is limited, the SCENIHR opinion identifies several potential hazards of re-using SUDs that may lead to a risk for patients. The opinion concludes that certain design features make a SUD unsuitable for reprocessing. Major hazards can arise from inadequate cleaning, disinfection and/or sterilization, resulting in contamination and possibly causing toxic reactions or infections.

The Commission will now finalize the report on the issue of the reprocessing of medical devices in light of the SCENIHR opinion and will submit it to the European Parliament and the Council.

To read the adopted scientific opinion, please go to:

http://ec.europa.eu/health/scientific_committees/emerging/docs/scenihr_0_027.pdf



European Consumer Centres help ash crisis passengers

On 4 May 2010, the network of European Consumer Centres (ECC-Net), supported by the European Commission and operating in all EU Member States (as well as Iceland and Norway), published a practical complaint package, which is designed to help consumers affected by recent flight disruptions to exercise their consumer rights guaranteed under EU laws. The package includes a standard complaint letter, contact details of all airlines and other practical advice.

The network of European Consumer Centres (ECC-Net) has been working since the start of the volcanic ash crisis to offer practical help to passengers who got stranded as a result of flight disruptions and are experiencing difficulties having their consumer rights respected. The number of consumers who have contacted ECC-Net for help or advice on air passenger rights has risen seven times during the first week of the crisis compared with the previous week.

The European Commission and the ECC-Net have now made available – in all languages of the EU – a practical complaint package which will help consumers effectively claim their rights. The package includes:

- A standard complaint letter, available in national languages;
- A list of addresses where complaint letters can be sent;
- Advice on the use of out-of-court dispute resolution with the company, and the use of the EU small claims procedure, e.g. to claim the refunds due;
- Answers to frequently asked questions.

Some examples of the thousands of

cases handled by national ECCs include:

- ECC Belgium: a traveller on a package holiday was stranded with three children due to a cancelled flight. The tour operator failed to reroute him and refused to cover extra nights in the hotel. As a result, he was rapidly running out of funds, and the hotel threatened to evict him or confiscate his passport.

- ECC Ireland: an Irish traveller with a serious medical condition was stranded in Romania. His medication was running out and was unavailable locally, which his doctor confirmed could have serious health consequences. The airline refused to offer him priority on the next available flight, citing overbooking.

ECC-Net handles about 60,000 cases annually for consumers who turn to them for advice or for help with problems they experienced while shopping or travelling across borders within the EU.

In 2009, one in three complaints handled by ECCs concerned transport (33%).

Among those, more than 75% concerned air transport. Within the latter group of complaints, almost eight out of ten (79.2%) concerned air passenger rights, while luggage-related complaints (loss of theft) accounted for over 20%.

In the summer of 2010, ECC-Net will finalise a joint project reviewing complaints related to the air transport handled by the network in 2008.

For further information, please see:

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/health_consumer/icelandic-volcanic-cloud/index_en.htm#consumers

and

http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/ecc/index_en.htm

EU Veterinary Week 2010

The third edition of the EU Veterinary Week, organised in partnership with the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) will run from 14 to 20 June.

The theme for the EU Veterinary Week 2010 will be identification and traceability along the food chain.

The week will be launched in Brussels by a two-day conference in the Charlemagne building, to be held on 14-15 June. The aim of the conference will be to outline the close link between identification and traceability for veterinary purposes and the numerous additional benefits along the food chain - from farm management to product quality.

The conference will start on Monday 14 June and, following the opening statements, there will be a session devoted to the identification of live animals aiming to link traceability



and livestock farming. On Tuesday 15 June the morning session will cover the topic of traceability in the food and feed chain including labelling. The afternoon session will be devoted to traceability in international trade.

It is envisaged that the conference will be attended by over 400 participants including the Chief Veterinary Officers from EU Member States, as well as representatives of third countries, international organisations, EU veterinary faculties, stakeholder organisations and journalists.

For further information, please see:

http://ec.europa.eu/food/dyna/conference/draft_programme_2010.pdf

Directive on organs transplantation

On 19 May the European Parliament voted in favour of the EU Directive on standards of quality and safety of human organs intended for transplantation.

The package containing the two Commission initiatives – the Directive and the Action Plan – is important in order to ensure high quality and safe organ transplantation across Europe for the benefit of patients.

The key objectives of these two initiatives are: to improve quality and safety of human organs for transplantation; to increase organ availability; to make transplantation systems more efficient and accessible.

The proposed Directive will set the legal framework for the basic quality and safety requirements, while the Action Plan will focus on increasing the availability of organs and the organisational efficiency of transplantation systems.

There are approximately 50,000 people in the European Union currently waiting for a transplant and 12 patients die every day because no organ was available for them. By setting high standards for quality and safety of the transplantation process, thousands of patients throughout the EU will be saved.

Frameworks for quality and safety will be established in all Member States to cover all stages of the chain from donation to transplantation. Member States shall be encouraged to improve better cooperation and exchange organs.

The Directive will enter into force later this year and Member States will have to transpose it within two years.

For further information, please see:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/10/203&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

In brief



Risks from cords and drawstrings in children's clothing

A recent EU market surveillance exercise checked the safety of children's clothes with cords and drawstrings, with which there can be a risk of strangulation, especially for children up to 7 years.

Market surveillance authorities in 11 Member States inspected more than 16,000 such garments between 2008 and 2010, and the results published on 23 March by the European Commission show that 1 in 10 items were in breach of safety requirements under the relevant European standard.

The project was carried out by authorities in 11 Member States under PROSAFE, the EU network of surveillance authorities between August 2008 and February 2010. They did 4642 inspections with particular focus on retailers but also wholesalers, manufacturers and importers, of which 61 were done at EU borders together with customs authorities.

16,300 garments were checked, 2188 did not comply with one or more of the requirements of the European safety standard. Almost 70 % of the non-compliant garments were clothes for babies and young children. Corrective actions were taken by the national authorities.

Manufacturers, distributors, importers and retailers must ensure that cords and drawstrings in children clothes comply with the European standard EN 14682:2007 or provide an equivalent level of safety.

Member States continue to monitor the safety of children clothes benefiting from best practice and the training acquired during the joint action. Cooperation with economic operators will continue to increase their awareness and understanding of the safety requirements they have to fulfil when placing children garments on the market.

The report is available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/docs/cords_drawstrings_report_en.pdf



Public consultation on veterinary pharmaceuticals

In the context of co-decision procedure concerning the proposal for a Regulation on residue limits of pharmaceutical products in foodstuffs, the Commission engaged itself to present in 2010 an assessment of the problems in the application of the veterinary medicinal products directive with a view to making, where appropriate, legal proposals.

In this frame, the European Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Consumers is launching a public consultation in order to pave the way for a better regulation of veterinary pharmaceuticals, safeguarding public and animal health while increasing the competitiveness of companies.

By means of this public consultation, the Directorate-General for Health and Consumers intends to consult all stakeholders on their views on the strengths and weaknesses of the current legal framework for veterinary medicinal products and how it could be improved.

The comments received will help DG Health and Consumers to draft the impact assessment on a revision of the veterinary legal framework and, where appropriate, to draft propos-

als to change the legal framework.

Through this public consultation, DG Health and Consumers is committed to ensure that all stakeholders can make their views known on this important issue.

Contributions are invited from all stakeholders and interested parties dealing with medicines for veterinary use. Stakeholders who are not established within the European Union are likewise invited to comment. Comments from Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) involved in the pharmaceutical sector are especially welcomed.

All contributions will be carefully analysed. A summary of the outcome of the consultation will be published on the Pharmaceuticals website of the European Commission and also sent directly to all contributors. The results of the consultation will be utilised for the impact assessment report on a revision of the legal framework for veterinary medicinal products.

To find out more and to participate to the public consultation, please go to:

<http://ec.europa.eu/yourvoice/ipm/forms/dispatch?form=vetframework>

Shanghai World Exposition 2010

The long-awaited Shanghai Expo takes place between 1st May and 31st October in Shanghai, China on the theme "Better city, better life".

The EU has set up a pavilion together with Belgium, and its exhibition is based around the theme of "Intelligent Europe", which takes in the sub-themes of "Open Europe", "Green Europe" and "Living Europe".

The EU is China's main economic partner. The Expo is a unique opportunity to further develop diplomatic links with China and to present our policies and projects to thousands of

key stakeholders. The event also offers the chance to connect with millions of visitors, the vast majority of which will be Chinese and many of whom will be largely unfamiliar with the European Union and European culture.

The European Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Consumers participates with some thematic events to highlight many key topics such as healthy cities, food safety, research for healthy life, etc.

For further information, please see:

http://europa.eu/expo2010/index_en.htm

In brief



New Commission's video on reduction of health inequalities in the EU

The brand new video "Reducing health inequalities in the European Union" was released on 04 May and is now available on the European Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Consumers website.

The video is available in four languages (English, French, German and Spanish).

To see the video, please go to:

http://ec.europa.eu/health/social_determinants/videos/index_en.htm

Conference on Consumer Complaints

Held on 27 May at Albert Borschette Centre in Brussels, this high-level conference on "Consumer complaints and the implementation of a harmonised methodology to classify and report consumer complaints" was organised by the European Commission, DG Health and Consumers (SANCO).

On this occasion, the Commission presented the harmonised methodology for classifying and reporting consumer complaints, and brought together complaints experts and policymakers to exchange views on how best to facilitate the implementation of the methodology and improve understanding on analysing and using complaints data.

The conference has been web-streamed and presentations and videos have been uploaded to the website after the conference.

For further information, please see:

<http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/confer->



The views expressed in Health & Consumer Voice do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the European Commission.

© European Union, 2010. Reproduction of articles (excluding photographs) is authorised, except for commercial purposes, provided that the source is mentioned.

Chief Editor: Eric Thévenard.

Editors: Rosita Scanferla, in cooperation with the EC Health and Consumers DG.

Layout: Rosita Scanferla.

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/health_consumer/index_en.htm
Email: sanco-newsletter@ec.europa.eu