



The European Older People's Platform

La Plate-forme européenne des Personnes âgées



Information to patients on prescription medicines: What do older people expect from the EU

Anne-Sophie Parent, Director AGE



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EU citizens tend to live longer and increasingly need medical treatment and medicines when they grow older.

They need relevant, independent and comparative information on medicines, health promotion and treatments to make truly informed choices



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Older people consume a relatively high percentage of the prescription medicines consumed in the EU, often in polypharmacy.

They rely mainly on health professionals (doctors, pharmacists, nurses, carers) and on patients' leaflets for information about the medications they are prescribed.



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But they also know that they are sometimes prescribed medicines they do not need or which have significant side effects for elderly people.

They feel that more reliable and objective information is needed about the effect of polypharmacy among the elderly as this is a major health hazard.



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For AGE members, pharmaceutical companies cannot be considered as a reliable source of unbiased information, due to an obvious and unavoidable conflict of interest.

Experience has shown that pharmaceutical companies cannot be relied upon to provide timely and updated information about their products' side effects (e.g. VIOXX).



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According to the Treaties, the EU has a duty to ensure adequate user/consumer protection.

This can only be done by setting up an independent European body to collect and disseminate updated information about all medications sold in the EU, contrary to what is proposed in the Directive on Information to Patients



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Doctors and pharmacists have the main responsibility to explain the need and effects of all prescription drugs to older people and their carers (formal and informal)

Older people and their carers should get an explanation of what and how to report about the side effects of drugs they are prescribed so that updated information is available to other patients.



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To enable truly informed choice the whole chain of data collection, processing and dissemination of information on medicines and treatments must be entrusted to bodies independent from the pharmaceutical industry and provided in a user-friendly and accessible way (e.g. leaflets are printed in too small letter fonts).



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The EU pharmacovigilance system should be funded by EU funds (no industry or national funding) to guarantee its independence.

This would help improve older people's confidence in information made available to patients.



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With the free movement of patients, it is urgent to ensure a more harmonised protection of users/consumers' right to independent and reliable information on medicines and treatments across the EU.

AGE members count on EP support to ensure that public health objectives prevail over private interests in this debate.



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**Rue Froissart 111
1040 Bruxelles - Belgique
tél. : +32.2.280.14.70
fax : +32.2.280.15.22
info@age-platform.org
www.age-platform.org**