

Europe

Without the public investment seen in the United States and, to a lesser degree, in Canada and the United Kingdom, what would health care professionals worldwide have in the way of reliable medical and pharmaceutical information?

The *Prescrire* team draws much of its information from the literature made openly available by public institutions in these three countries.

All these institutions, including the US Food and Drug Administration and National Institutes of Health, have their limitations and suffer from conflicts of interest. The information they publish nonetheless allows citizens to understand, act, choose, debate and, if necessary, protest.

The European Union seeks to rival the United States on political and economic grounds, while keeping “European-type” social policies. This will remain a pipedream, however, unless the EU provides itself with the necessary means to achieve change, including adequate public investment.

It is hypocritical to point the finger at the negative impact of American liberalism on the welfare system if Europe fails to invest

in clinical research and to create powerful independent institutions capable of providing health care professionals and the public with reliable health information.

This issue concerns all fields of public health, especially drug safety.

For several years now, the European Commission, supported by a majority of European governments, has spearheaded attempts to create ultraliberal health policies. Little by little, administrative safeguards have been undermined or simply bypassed. Little by little, the agencies that are supposed to regulate drugs and medical devices in the public interest have become beholden to their paymasters – the multinational pharmaceutical industry. And the public welfare sector is kindly requested to pick up the bill, in silence...

The United States deserves credit for providing us with clear-cut examples of best-case and worst-case scenarios.

Europe must follow the best examples, while employing its wealth of inventiveness to avoid what is worst with the American system.

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