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Making a difference

Healthcare professionals who invest in their own continuing education based on reliable sources of information, simply because they want to provide their patients with the best possible care, are rarely singled out by the media or government ministers.

Healthcare professionals who help to inform or educate their fellow citizens, who take the time to make their patients more autonomous, are not among the recipients of health insurance system bonuses.

Healthcare professionals who provide tactful and unbiased information to patients and caregivers, or who seek to improve access to care for the least privileged members of society, apparently matter little to large governing institutions such as the European Commission.

Healthcare professionals, educators and mentors who seek to infuse their students with the “patient-first” ethic are rarely the central theme of major medical conferences or international publications.

Instead of encouraging good practices, the authorities, the media, and so-called opinion leaders prefer to chase therapeutic or diagnostic mirages and to promote the latest gimmicks.

Yet healthcare professionals who are trained to use automated external defibrillators, and encourage the public to do so, help save lives (see *Prescrire Int* June issue and page 228 of this issue).

And healthcare professionals who pass on their expertise, for example by teaching patients to use INR self-measurement devices, help to optimise anticoagulant therapy and thus prevent frequent and serious adverse events (see *Prescrire Int* June 2010 issue).

Drug innovation is still at a virtual standstill (see *Prescrire Int* April 2010 issue). Pending the long-promised breakthroughs, knowledge accumulated over the last decades, along with tried and tested therapeutic or diagnostic tools, remain a valuable resource, provided they are correctly used and promoted.

It is time to focus on those whose efforts, day after day, provide patients with high-quality care.

Prescrire salutes the many conscientious grassroots healthcare professionals who simply want to “do the right thing”. You are making a true difference.

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