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Plenary session III Forum V.doc / Thomas Kaltenbacher

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Plenary Session III

Forum V Stipe Oreskovic

The Patient in the Information Age-

Facts and Fiction

In his summary of the EHF's session on health in the information age- patients/ citizens and health systems, chairman Prof. Stipe Oreskovic once again stated that the focus in future health policies must be patient- centred.

With data provided from research and academia in the scientific field the current situation in European countries was analysed. On the civil action side there were interesting reports from Italy, the UK and the US how active citizens have imposed changes to their countries' health policies.

A restructuring of the political power, as currently aimed at by the EC, should complete a solution that leads European countries away from disastrous health policies.

What are the issues?

How can the momentary state of societies being or becoming information societies be maintained eliminating the danger of a 'technology seduction'? How should social structures be imbedded in the scientific progress? Does evidence based medicine lack personal touch? What about rights and responsibilities? Chartas and declarations have dealt with these issues but do they help the patient and who is that patient- is he user, consumer, customer, insured person or simply a sick person in need of help?

It's all 'bout the money

especially when it comes to financing scientific research on symptoms, treatment options services and benefits. However, it is clear that, without a change of the care culture and a reorganisation of health systems to patient-centred ones, no improvements will be made. If patients' questions and concerns

are ignored, all the money invested will be a waste, tackling the problem at the wrong end.

Power to the people

Who can make the change and will they be allowed to by the political institutions? All groups working on patient/ citizen focused matters on a regional or national basis, offering their support in making decisions or building up commercial strategies, should be represented in the EC's European Health Forum (and the latter should receive a new name to avoid confusion with the European Health Forum Gastein). But will the EC's Forum open the doors? Not before the EC improves transparency on admission to this forum and reviews the selection procedure, setting up rules for organizations to work with, the patient at the bottom of the political line will benefit.