

6. European Health Forum Gastein 2003 "Health & Wealth"



A Pill for more power at work?
Innovative drug development as an economic
life-serum

Media Information – 3rd October 2003

Actual press informations and photos:
www.ehfg.org/presscenter/2003/

1.1.1. International Forum Gastein

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Sick Europe?

The number of patients in Germany between 1997 and 2002 has almost reduplicated from 8 to 15 million. Forecasts indicate that the number of stroke patients over 65 will be twice as high by 2030, the number of Alzheimer patients will reduplicate by 2040 , so will the number of people who need nursing care by 2050. The health system itself is not doing very well either.

One possibility to deal with the high financial burden on the Health system would be the extension of working times. Walter Köbele, president of the pharmaceutical producer PFIZER in Germany, pointed out at the 6th European Health Forum in Gastein, that people, who work longer have to stay healthy and able-bodied longer. This is where an innovative drug development must start in order to prevent sickness and the need for nursing care.

Not only will people that work longer and are healthy be less of a burden on hospitals and nursing care facilities, but they would also strengthen the economy through their increased productivity. Why is the connection between drug research, employment situation and economic stability missed by the governments and instead a course towards a research-hostile money-saving measures is taken.

Wrong signals by the governments

Instead of investing in new products, the governments have allowed the health market to fall ill. Flaws in the treatment of patients, a split-up into two classes of privately insured and state-insured, as well as ignorance towards the medical progress are further damaging the health system. According to Köbel more than half a million of Alzheimer patients in Germany are being prescribed medication of doubtful effects. Especially in this regard the innovative drug development would have to help. The in-patient care of an Alzheimer patient, for example, costs 40000 Euro in four years, a sufficient medication based on innovative drug research only costs 7300 Euro.

Opportunity instead of menace

The importance of cost-reduction in innovative medicine is not adequately adjudicated by the government. The lack of investment in patient- and budget-friendly medical innovation turns out to be an economic own goal. Therefore better cooperation of all parties is desirable in the future.

Measures have to be taken to promote a healthy lifestyle, to avoid diseases by information and education and simplify the access to the health-care-system.

Apart from that the economic business surroundings and the competitive ability of pharmaceutical developers have to be improved.

According to Köbeles, innovative drug development, would then be no threat, but a chance for future health-politics.