



EHFG 2011: MAKING LIFE BETTER - AND CUTTING COSTS BY 50%

A pioneering project called INTERLINKS aims to improve long-term care for older people, experts reported today at the European Health Forum Gastein. One pilot project has already shown that satisfaction can be improved while cutting costs by 50%.

Bad Hofgastein, October 7, 2011 – Kai Leichsenring, Research Associate at the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research in Vienna, presented to the European Health Forum Gastein (EHFG) the INTERLINKS project being coordinated by the Centre under the 7th EU Framework Programme for Research. This is a framework for long-term care (LTC) for elderly people, and seeks to inspire and stimulate health and social care professionals, policy-makers, administrators, and NGO staff to work towards integrated systems of care.

This Framework has been constructed and validated to describe and analyse LTC systems for older people from a European perspective. Particular aspects of the various national models emerging in Europe studied to show how the links to healthcare services, the quality of LTC services, the incentives for prevention and rehabilitation, and the support for informal carers, can be governed and financed to enhance structures, processes and outcomes.

Plugging the gaps in long-term care

One of the model ways of working that are illustrating the INTERLINKS Framework, the so-called “Buurtzorg Model” in the Netherlands, delivers care by small self-managing teams of a maximum of 12 community nurses, and by promoting activation and self-care in the neighbourhood. By innovative organisational approaches costs can be cut by 50% while delivering both high user satisfaction and cut costs, it was said.

“Older people and their carers want to be independent and have some control over their care and respective choices,” he told the meeting. “But gaps in LTC pathways often lead to poor quality care. INTERLINKS has identified and analysed practice examples that look for ways to fill these gaps and improve care. We aim to point planners, and those who provide services, towards improved ways of supporting older people. We take particular notice of older people who may be difficult to reach.”

The European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research is coordinating the INTERLINKS project (see <http://interlinks.euro.centre.org>) with partners based in universities, national, and international research institutes in 12 EU member states and Switzerland: the Ecole d'études sociales et pédagogiques, Switzerland; the University of Southern Denmark; the Institut de Recherche et Documentation en Economie de la Santé, Irdes, France; National Institute for Health and Welfare - THL, Finland; Institut für Soziale Infrastruktur - ISIS, Germany; Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung, Germany ; CMT Prooptiki ltd., Greece ; University of Valencia - ERI Polibienestar, Spain ; Studio Come S.r.l., Italy ; Vilans, The Netherlands ; Institute for Labour and Family Research, Slovak Republic ; Forum for Knowledge and Common Development, Stockholm County Council,

Sweden ;University of Kent - Centre for Health Services Studies, UK ; University of Birmingham - HSMC, UK.

The EHFG is the most important conference on health care policy in the EU. This year it attracted more than 600 decision-makers from 45 countries for discussions on the latest developments in health care policy.

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