## The informed patient: better therapeutic outcomes through patient empowerment

*At the European Health Forum Gastein 2015, a workshop held by the European Patients’ Forum, in cooperation with SANOFI, focused on the positive effects of patient empowerment on the healing process. Patients need to be actively involved in medical decision-making processes and be able to communicate with doctors on an equal footing.* **Bad Hofgastein, 02. October 2015.** Patient empowerment means a strengthening and/or an enabling of patients and calls for a re-evaluation of the classic doctor-patient relationship. Patients need to be informed about their particular illness and about alternative treatments or therapies and be proactively involved in the management of their illness in cooperation with the responsible doctor. This proves particularly effective with regard to chronic diseases and significantly improves treatment outcomes. The relatively new approach is a key factor in patient-centred, sustainable and cost-efficient healthcare. “The patient is on an equal footing with the doctor and takes responsibility with regard to treatment of his or her illness. The patient also takes any relevant preventative measures, is aware of any risks and is in a position to ask questions about suggested therapies”, explains Nicola Bedlington, President of the European Patients’ Forum.

**Changes in the role of the patient**
The European Patients’ Forum (EPF) has launched an EU-wide campaign promoting patient empowerment and highlighting the importance of education, expertise, equality, experience and inclusion of the patient. From the patient’s point of view, healthcare systems are not performing satisfactorily in terms of meeting their needs, involving them in treatment processes and treating them as equal partners in care. The EPF seeks to promote understanding of the issue of patient empowerment, in particular among policy makers in the health sector.
 **eHealth is of increasing importance**
Involving patients in treatment of their conditions also requires use of digital solutions. A six-hour parallel forum hosted by the Directorate-General for Communications Networks (GD CNECT) focused on this topic. One example here is the provision of real-time and instantly available information about a patient’s
illness, which acts as an important basis for patient empowerment. An EU-wide
project known as PALANTE (PAtients Leading and mANaging their
healTHcare through EHealth), has already been launched and focuses on enabling
patient-related data to be collected and saved in accordance with data protection laws. Along with a list giving details of medical tests, the patient can access useful information about his or her illness. This improves patient health literacy and enhances the patient’s self-management skills, making him or her an expert on his or her particular medical condition. Enhancing patient empowerment is a major priority of EU health policy and the aim is that this be continuously strengthened.

**mHealth – Mobile Health: technology evolves quickly**

During the EHFG mHealth was discussed during a session on Modern Healthcare. One of the speakers was Michal Boni, Member of the European Parliament (EPP, Poland) who stated: “The creation at the healthcare area - the new demand - is much needed: for much more efficient, friendly for users, and properly personalized medical services. We need this demand as a game changer for both sides of the medical services: doctors and patients. This market demand will be possible, if the technological inventions will be fully implementable and will have the reasonable and profitable business models.” Boni said that the digital revolution in the healthcare area requires a reasonable leadership - with all stakeholders’ participation and that this is a multi-step process, which includes public awareness campaigns, research and development, trials and their evaluation to prove effectiveness, and guidelines for use. Boni: “The policy-making process rarely keeps up with technological development or public’s demand; this is especially true in the context of m-health – where technology evolves so quickly.”
Michele Pastore from Samsung Electronics and Chairman of DIGITALEUROPE eHealth group, also spoke on mHealth as a solution. Representing the Brussels based organisation he explained that future activities within the field of mHealth should focus on the following measures: Adequacy of Current EU Legal Framework, Protection of Personal Data, Opportunities of Big Data, Safety of Applications, Impact on Health Care Systems, Encouraging Interoperability and International Cooperation. In particular, he presented an industry initiative aimed at drafting a code of conduct on management of personal data collected by health apps highlighting the need to foster user data on one hand, and to help app developers to comply with the EU legal framework.

**About the European Health Forum Gastein (EHFG)**
The European Health Forum Gastein (EHFG) offers a unique platform made up of and for experts, policy makers, opinion leaders and interest groups from the health policy field. Over the last 18 years, the EHFG has developed into an institution which addresses and discusses current and future trends and developments in European health policy and thus plays a role in shaping European health policy. The EHFG is in receipt of funding from various bodies including the European Commission, the Austrian Ministry of Health and the Province of Salzburg. The EHFG is organised by the International Forum Gastein (IFG).

**Press contact**

**EHFG Press Office**
Julia Kent
t +43 1 890 04 29 – 0
 julia.kent(at)minc.at

Marion Velik
t +43 1 890 04 29 – 0
 marion.velik(at)minc.at