

Medicines in Poland Workshop Series: Independent Medicines Information

14 November 2009



Overview

This one-day workshop was hosted at the Airport Hotel Okecie in Warsaw on Saturday, November 14, 2009. Eleven university students, representing the medical and pharmacy faculties across Poland, and one civil society representative attended.

The aim of the workshop was to raise awareness about the importance of unbiased, reliable medicines information and the real health consequences of promotional information. The workshop sought to enhance the skills of future health professionals and medicines users by leading critical appraisals of medicines advertisements and highlighting independent sources of medicines information.

List of Participants

Adrian Kowalik	Anna Peretka	Małgorzata Urbanowicz
Agata Goralczyk	Karolina Antoniak	Michał Włoch
Agnieszka Dunaj	Magdalena Ankiersztejn-Bartczak	Paulina Marszałek
Agnieszka Kuswik	Małgorzata Gryka	

Speakers and Facilitators

Teresa Alves, HAI-Europe Coordinator

Katrina Perehudoff, HAI-Europe Project Officer

Summary of presentations

Introduction to Medicines Information

The meeting began with an introduction video called *The New Epidemic: A short film about motivational deficiency disorder*, created by Ray Moynihan and Miranda Burne, with thanks to Consumers International. As a starting point for workshop discussion, the video explores real relationships between health professionals and the pharmaceutical industry through humour and irony. The video was followed by a presentation on the need for independent information.

Best Practices in Medicines Information

Teresa Alves lead a brainstorm on the cornerstones of quality medicines information. She presented eight European examples of best practice in information provision that are created and managed by a variety of stakeholders including ministries of health, consumer organisations, healthcare assessment agencies and healthcare professionals. In groups, attendees were asked to write a 'wish list' of selected modes of medicines information that would be ideal in Poland. Students were asked to think of how their 'wish list' could fill the current gaps in information sources or quality.

EVENT MEMO

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Medicines Information: Independent or Promotional?

The joint WHO/HAI Manual, *Understanding and responding to pharmaceutical promotion: a practical guide*, was introduced as a teaching tool for medical and pharmacy faculties. Key topics in the manual were outlined and students were encouraged to discuss the opportunity to pilot the manual with their faculty leaders. A critical appraisal of promotional information, one of the exercises from the manual, was introduced in group work. Using promotional announcements for prescription and non-prescription medicines taken from print media, groups were asked to discuss the content and format and to suggest improvements that would create a more balanced, fact-based publication.

The final presentation, *A challenge to independent information: the Information to Patients' Directive*, covered past and present legal proposals on the expanded role of the pharmaceutical industry in communicating about prescription medicines directly to patients in Europe. Several European examples of current breaches on the ban on advertising and "disease awareness" campaigns were presented as cautionary examples of possible 'information' campaigns in Europe if the 'Information to Patients' Directive is enacted.

The powerpoint presentations from the speakers are available to download here: www.haiweb.org

The main issues arising from the plenary discussion were as follows:

Pharmacists and print media are the primary sources that patients look to for medicines information. E.g. newspapers, supplements.

Lessons learned for future workshops on medicines information in Poland

The workshop was closed with a round table discussion with all participants on the impact of this one-day event. Each participant shared his/her key learning outcomes from the day and areas of future interest. This debrief session was an informative exercise that allowed us to pinpoint the day's successes and areas for improvement in order to adapt future workshops to better meet the needs of young health professionals in Poland.

Key learning outcomes

- Doctors and pharmacists play an essential role in communicating medicines information to patients.
- The workshop was an introduction to the HAI network and the need for organisations to work these issues.
- The European comparison of independent information sources was interesting and informative. It helped to identify reliable sources of information.
- The video and presentations raised awareness about techniques used by the pharmaceutical industry to promote medicines.

Topics of interest for future workshops

- Advocacy skills and messages students can use to reach national policy makers
- European and national regulations on pharmaceutical promotion and how to lodge complaints
- How to create and/or find accessible and easy to understand independent information on medicines for patients and healthcare professionals in Poland

ANNEX 1 – PARTICIPANTS' EVALUATION



Written evaluation (participants)

Content – new and important information: 4 strongly agree, 4 agree

Speakers – knowledgeable and effective communicators: 7 strongly agree, 3 agree

Structure – sufficient time for topics and useful interaction: 5 strongly agree, 4 agree, 1 disagree (not enough time)

Overall – workshop was useful: 4 strongly agree, 6 agree

Overall – expectations were exceeded (5), expectations were met (5)

Key learning outcomes reported (participants)

European comparison of unbiased medicines sources was very interesting; keen to learn about sources or initiatives in other countries (this was said many times)

Learned about the HAI network

Good to know that there are people out there tackling [unethical] medicines information and promotion; there is a delay in reaching Poland with this message

Learned which organizations are suited to give medicines information

Learned that it is essential the doctors and pharmacists communication medicines information to the patient

“I will have a brand-new attitude towards (medicines) advertising that my colleagues and I encounter”

It was really useful to get information about techniques used by the pharmacy industry and to become more aware of it. I will also pay more attention, reading some drug leaflets.

Topics of interest for future workshops (participants)

Advocacy

Specific methods and strategies used to win over or convince politicians, including MEPs

It would be nice to hear what we can do as students to improve the situation (about medicines information)

Drug promotion regulation

What pharmaceutical companies are and are not allowed to do according to the law (this request was made many times)

Workshop about organizations and solutions of good promotion about medicines in Poland or a different country

Independent sources

how to create an independent information web portal in Poland for use by patients and doctors

how to access reliable and independent information for simple people

how to convey information about medicines information in a simple way to patients, especially the elderly, who are taking many medicines at the same time (this request was made many times)

Topic to cover in the future: workshop about organizations and solutions of good promotion about medicines in Poland or a different country