



Medicines Information: Independent or Promotional?

**HAI-Europe Workshop
13 April 2009**

**34th EPSA Annual Congress
Lisbon, Portugal**



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Workshop Programme

Introduction to Medicines Information

17:00 – 17:05 Welcome and introduction: what do patients and consumers need?

17:05 – 17:30 Video

Independent or Promotional?

17:30 – 17:50 Healthcare professionals and promotional information (presentation)

17:50 – 18:00 Best practices in medicines information (presentation)

18:00 – 18:40 Critical appraisal of promotional information (survey and plenary discussion)

18:40 – 18:50 Medicines promotion manual: a guide for medicine and pharmacy students (presentation)

18:50 – 19:00 Brief discussion and closing

Workshop Rationale

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Health information is a fundamental and necessary part of healthcare. However, the development of direct to consumer advertising (DTCA), disease awareness (or “disease mongering”) campaigns, “compliance programs”, and direct and indirect pharmaceutical industry support of patient organisations have blurred the boundaries between drug promotion and health information. If patients and consumers are to be able to make informed choices about their health, there needs to be a clear distinction between information and advertising that is disguised as “information”.

Relevant health information should be:

- *reliable*: evidence based (listing data sources), unbiased, and up-to-date, with full transparency on authorship and financing (enabling rejection of information influenced by conflicts of interests);
- *comparative*: presenting benefits and harms of the full range of available treatment options (including, where appropriate, the option not to treat), together with an explanation of the natural history of the disease, or condition; and
- *adapted to users*: understandable, accessible, and culturally sensitive.

Currently, there are many sources of relevant health information for the public both in Europe and internationally. specific tools have been developed to assess and rate the quality of health information. The aim of these tools is to help both information providers and users to ensure accuracy, quality and relevance to health care choices. This workshop will include many examples of quality assessment tools and information sources provided by health authorities, medical product agencies, healthcare assessment agencies, health care providers, health professionals, consumers’ organisations and independent patient groups.

Workshop Facilitators

Medicines information: Independent or Promotional?

Lisbon, Portugal

Teresa Leonardo Alves

Throughout her studies at the Faculty of Pharmacy, University of Porto, Portugal, Teresa became involved in the student association movement, at local, national and international levels. Her subsequent career placements were connected to pharmacy and public health issues and as a result, she became particularly interested in topics related to rational drug use and health policies. Teresa completed a Public Health Masters at the Netherlands Institute of Health Sciences, Rotterdam, in 2006, where she conducted a research project assessing the extent and variation of self-reported polypharmacy in Europe. In 2006, she joined Health Action International (HAI)- an independent network working to increase access to essential medicines and their rational use through research excellence and evidence-based advocacy – first as European campaigns officer and later as Coordinator for the European office. Teresa is currently reading for a PhD on Medicines' Information to Patients and Consumers at the Faculty of Sciences, School of Pharmacy, University of Utrecht in The Netherlands.

Organisation: Health Action International – Europe, Amsterdam, Netherlands

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Tiago Villanueva

Tiago Villanueva is a General Practitioner/Family Physician based in Lisbon, Portugal. He currently works as a part-time general practitioner/family physician and as a consultant for the Harvard Medical School - Portugal programme, which not only produces and publishes medical and health information for the general public, but also distributes educational material to medical students and health professionals in Portugal.

Tiago has a strong interest in medical journalism, having been a former BMJ Clegg Scholar and editor of the studentBMJ. He also works as a correspondent for the Canadian Medical Association Journal in Europe. He is a member and ambassador for Healthy Skepticism in Portugal, an organization aiming to decrease harm caused by misleading health information.

Organisation: Healthy Skepticism