



WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR EUROPE
COPENHAGEN

55622

EUR/ICP/CORD 94 03/MT03(S)
09995
Original: English
EUR/HFA target 37
1995

MEETING OF THE EUROPEAN FORUM OF MEDICAL ASSOCIATIONS AND WHO

Summary Report on a WHO Meeting

London, 23-24 March 1995

ABSTRACT

A meeting of the European Forum of Medical Associations, the tenth in a series between national medical associations (NMAs) and WHO, was held in London in March 1995. Some 100 leaders of NMAs participated, representing 43 of the 46 member and potential member associations from throughout the WHO European Region. With observers from Canada, nine international associations and representatives from European nursing and pharmacists' organizations, this was the largest meeting held so far. The Forum discussed the role of NMAs in the development of national policies for health, expanding further on the previous year's consideration of the overall problems of reforming health care systems. Following key presentations on health in the WHO Region for Europe, the European Union and the United Kingdom, many associations described their reforming experiences. In particular, those in central and eastern Europe shared their problems with health care policies following radical changes in the system of government. As a result of the discussion, the Forum adopted a statement on the issue. Reports had been received from 33 NMAs in response to questionnaires on the extent of initiatives related to Quality of Care (QCD) developments, continuing medical education, tobacco consumption, HIV and drug abuse. The first report was received from the QCD Action Group, following its establishment in 1994. Replies to the questionnaire indicated a wide variation in the degree of participation by NMAs in QCD. A meeting held in Cologne in March 1995 examined how to further the aims of the Action Group. Following the report from the Action Group on Tobacco and Health, which had held a meeting in Paris, the Forum adopted a statement urging governments to take further measures to curb smoking, including heavy taxation and a ban on advertising. Recognizing the threat of hepatitis B and C to both patients and health care staff, the Forum agreed on a statement calling for vaccine protection and training in safety procedures. Parallel workshops held during the Forum on the role of NMAs in health policy formulation demonstrated unanimous agreement that NMAs have a key role in advising on health policies, and that their advice is invaluable, carrying particular weight when there is consensus within the profession. The Forum adopted a statement calling on appropriate authorities to recognize this important role of NMAs. During a wide-ranging debate on the future of the medical profession in the next century, concern was expressed regarding health care rationing, medical unemployment and ethical standards. A statement was also adopted stressing once again the effects of armed conflict on health and called for ceasefires to take action against infectious diseases that threaten the civilian population. A post-Forum meeting for NMAs from central and eastern European countries covered lobbying of press, television and parliament; the problems of influence and structure of NMAs; and relations between government, the profession and universities.

This report is issued in English, French, German and Russian, and all rights are reserved by the WHO Regional Office for Europe. The document may nevertheless be freely reviewed, abstracted, reproduced or translated into any other language, but not for sale or for use in conjunction with commercial purposes. The WHO name and emblem are protected and may not be used on any reproduction or translation of this document without permission. Any views expressed by named authors are solely the responsibility of those authors. The Regional Office would appreciate receiving three copies of any translation.

TARGET 37

PARTNERS FOR HEALTH

By the year 2000, in all Member States, a wide range of organizations and groups throughout the public, private and voluntary sectors should be actively contributing to the achievement of health for all.

Keywords

SOCIETIES, MEDICAL
HEALTH CARE REFORM
HEALTH POLICY – trends
SMOKING – prevention and control
HEPATITIS B
HEPATITIS C
EXPOSED POPULATION
WAR
EUROPE
CCEE

STATEMENT ON HEALTH POLICIES

The European Forum of National Medical Associations and WHO, meeting in London on 23-24 March 1995,

AWARE of the responsibility of national medical associations (NMAs) in the health care of citizens of their countries;

REAFFIRMS the duty and obligation of NMAs to give considered advice to those responsible for the formulation of health policies and their implementation;

CALLS UPON those responsible, governments, health authorities and other bodies involved in the determination and implementation of health policy, both administratively and politically, to recognize the role of NMAs as key partners in the provision of advice on health policy.

STATEMENT ON TOBACCO AND HEALTH

The European Forum of National Medical Associations and WHO, meeting in London on 23-24 March 1995,

RECALLING its previous statements on Tobacco and Health in Basle (1992) and Budapest (1994);

URGES governments to enact strict legislation in order to:

- prohibit any advertising of tobacco, both direct and indirect;
- heavily tax tobacco products, a proven effective intervention;
- exclude tobacco from the national price index;
- affix appropriate health warnings on cigarette and other tobacco packaging;
- ensure the right to a smoke-free environment in public places including the workplace, transportation and educational establishments;

FURTHER CALLS UPON governments to increase information on the hazards of using tobacco products.

Finally, the Forum URGES each NMA in Europe to make its own premises smoke-free, to offer tobacco withdrawal courses for its members and to actively support national tobacco control programmes.

STATEMENT ON HEPATITIS B AND C

The European Forum of National Medical Associations and WHO, meeting in London on 23-24 March 1995,

CONCERNED at the increasing risks to both patients and professional staff from accidental infection with hepatitis B and C;

NOTING that both appropriate use of vaccine together with appropriate training in the handling and disposal of sharps will substantially reduce the incidence of this type of viral hepatitis;

CONSIDERING that for hepatitis where no treatment is available, the most effective action is to ensure careful training in the handling of sharps and assuring that all safety measures are strictly adhered to;

CONCERNED that for many health staff hepatitis B and C are occupational risks;

AWARE that in at least one Member State of the European Region of WHO, joint initiatives are taking place between the health ministry and the national medical association on the health and safety issues of hepatitis B and C, and that protection of staff by vaccination is being supported;

CALLS UPON all governments and those responsible for health care provision and the employment of health professionals:

- (a) to ensure the necessary testing of blood and other biological products for therapeutic or diagnostic use;
- (b) to ensure that health care staff at risk are offered vaccine protection and are also given training in safety procedures to reduce the risk of infection.

STATEMENT ON WAR-DEVASTATED POPULATIONS

The European Forum of National Medical Associations and WHO, meeting in London on 23-24 March 1995,

RECALLING its previous statements on the effects of armed conflict in terms of human suffering, disablement and displacement in Europe (Basle 1992), on help to the war-devastated populations in the former Yugoslavia (Utrecht 1993) and its statement on humanitarian assistance to the war-devastated populations in the countries of the former Yugoslavia (Budapest 1994);

APPALLED that since the statements, despite continuing efforts by many parties, armed conflict has continued in various parts of the European Region and the innocent civilian population continues to suffer directly through physical and emotional injury and indirectly through the threat of disease arising from disruption of all services including health services;

RECALLING that where there is no peace there can be no health, as war destroys the fabric of society with resulting privation and epidemic disease;

PAYS a special tribute to their colleagues, physicians and nurses who continue to provide medical care in terrible conditions without adequate resources, and at peril of their lives;

CALLS UPON all those in positions of authority and influence to recognize their responsibilities and to seek just solutions to their problems by peaceful means, and at all times to recognize their responsibility where widespread preventable disease threatens the civilian population, to arrange ceasefires to enable all necessary measures to be taken to protect the health of citizens.