Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Recommendation 1270 (1995)[1]

Quality pledge in health care and clinical and biological examinations

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Assembly draws attention to the Health for All in the Year 2000 campaign launched by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the many recommendations adopted within the Council of Europe, both by the Assembly and the Committee of Ministers, concerning public health and health care.

2. All these legal instruments have been drafted out of a concern to guarantee and improve the quality of medical care in particular and to ensure that care is dispensed in humane conditions with due respect for the right of each individual to social and health protection. Although the value of the texts is recognised and they remain entirely relevant, health care professionals and users are, unfortunately, unfamiliar with them, even though they are often incorporated into domestic legislation. There is therefore a need for them to be publicised and applied more widely.

3. The health sector is sensitive to the economic difficulties and budgetary constraints facing most European countries, in particular the countries undergoing a transition, which are striving to introduce fundamental reform of their health systems. Controlling health costs means increasing the health capital of all individuals by making them more responsible and improving the quality of the care dispensed.

4. All citizens can play an active part in this process. To this end, it is vital to promote education for health and information and familiarise citizens with the main standards adopted at European level. Generating awareness among providers of health care and patients will guarantee an improvement in the quality of care and clinical and biological examinations of all kinds.

5. In addition, research needs to be promoted effectively and findings disclosed as rapidly as possible so that scientific circles as well as patients may be informed.

6. The Assembly therefore recommends that the Committee of Ministers:

6.1. introduce a "quality pledge" and encourage its adoption by all the providers of all types of care in Europe, the aim being to guarantee a European standard of health care quality by ensuring that the main relevant WHO and Council of Europe texts are properly applied and publicly displayed;

6.2. the texts should be displayed in all premises where care is dispensed as well as in waiting rooms in hospitals, doctors' surgeries, medical analysis and biological laboratories and any other place where people are able to obtain health information and education;

6.3. the pledge should be a voluntary act on the part of health care providers, which could be recorded by their national academies of medicine or professional associations, these being bodies that could play an active role as regards cases of repeated breaches of the pledge;

6.4. the pledge should be indicated as follows on professional nameplates and other official documents: "Doctor X..., Hospital Y..., signatory of the Council of Europe health care quality pledge";

1. Assembly debate on 28 April 1995 (16th Sitting) (see Doc. 7213, report of the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee, rapporteur: Mr Daniel). Text adopted by the Assembly on 28 April 1995 (16th Sitting)

6.5. in conjunction with national academies and associations of doctors and other health care professionals, the Council of Europe should make sure that this European seal of quality benefits all those who comply with the relevant provisions, thereby contributing to an improvement in the quality of health care and its harmonisation at European level.

6.6. To facilitate the implementation of this recommendation, the Assembly calls on the Committee of Ministers to set up a select working party:

6.6.1. which would comprise at least three consultants respectively appointed by the Parliamentary Assembly, the European Health Committee of the Council of Europe and WHO;

6.6.2. and which, in conjunction with the Rapporteur of the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee, would consider and set out the procedures for implementing this proposal and putting it into practice and would make appropriate recommendations in agreement with national academies of medicine and professional associations