



EUROPEAN UNION OF GENERAL PRACTITIONERS

Alment Praktiserende Lægers Europæiske Organisation – UEMO
European Union of General Practitioners – UEMO
Europäische Vereinigung der Allgemeinärzte – UEMO
Union Européenne des Médecins Omnipraticiens – UEMO
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UEMO 2001/019

EU UPDATE

Notes & news from the European Union

by Thomas E. Kennedy, Ph.D.

Long Fight for the Increase in duration of GP training in Europe The minimum duration of training for general practice in the fifteen Member States of the European Union as well as in the affiliated countries is about to rise from two to three years. However, member states in which an obligatory training course in general practice is also included in the basic studies would be able to count one year of this training as part of the three-year course required for GPs. This option is available only to those two Member States in which the duration of this training was two years on 1 January 2001. The European Union of General Practitioners (UEMO) has fought long and hard for this enhancement in GP training throughout the 1990s in recognition of the increasing responsibility of the GP as a key figure in the health care systems throughout Europe. In 1991, UEMO adopted this increase as official policy, in 1994 sponsored a Concensus Conference which recommended it to the European Commission, following which, in 1995, the official European Advisory Committee on Medical Training (ACMT) adopted the recommendation. Nonetheless there still remained a five-year fight to get official Europe to honor the far-sighted UEMO and ACMT recommendation. Only this year, with a good deal of help from a patient-friendly European Parliament did the recommendation finally squeak through to become European law. In a Europe where many countries require as much as five years training for a doctor to go into General Practice, a Europe-wide minimum standard of two-years training was allowing GPs in countries with the lower duration to cross borders and work on an equal footing in the primary care system with their better-trained colleagues in neighboring countries -- to the disadvantage of the unwitting patients.

The Advance from CME to CPD to CQI .

One of the major topics on the agenda of all the European medical groupings over the past months is a discussion which is taking the movement for improved systems of Continuing Medical Education (CME) forward into the philosophy of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) with a view toward Continuing Quality Improvement (CQI).

UEMO – PRESIDENCY

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In past years each of the European groupings and craft organizations has developed its own policy statement on CME in recognition of the great importance of stressing the need and facilitating the possibilities for physicians to keep up to date with continuously progressing knowledge, skill, and technique in the art of medicine. Thus, the Standing Committee of European Doctors (CP), the European Union of General Practitioners (UEMO), the European Union of Medical Specialists (UEMS), the European Association of Senior Hospital Physicians (AEMH), the Permanent Working Group of European Junior Doctors (PWG) and other groupings have each evolved a policy in this field specific to its own area; now, however, a joint working group has been established with representatives of all these groups to forge a common policy for the future in this extremely important area. Further work is being done to develop this policy in meetings scheduled in June and September of 2001.

European Advisory Committee on Medical Training Under Threat In 1975 when Europe adopted the so-called medical directives -- the law that facilitated mutual recognition of medical credentials among the Member States of the European Union -- it also set up an Advisory Committee on Medical Training whose function was to monitor the quality of training. This Committee -- known as the ACMT -- consists of representatives of the profession, the authorities and the universities in each of the member states. In recent years, however, the European Commission has voiced its intention to do away with the advisory committee system (such committees also exist for other health professions -- nurses, dentists, veterinarians, etc.) as they have been viewed with official eyes as too expensive and unwieldy. The medical profession has made a firm stand against the abolition of this Committee

which is a valuable instrument within the field of medical education and free movement of doctors. At present, the final fate of the ACMT continues to be unknown, although the European Commission has indicated it will be issuing a "Communication" on its future. To date, no such Communication has been seen.

The global profession in support of human rights At a recent meeting of the World Medical Association in Edinburgh in October 2000, it was agreed to set up a Human Rights Working Group within the WMA as a framework for the medical profession to help resist and stand against violations of human rights, particularly on behalf of medical practitioners in vulnerable positions in this respect. In cooperation within this group, the WMA, the International Council for the Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (IRCT), the British Medical Association, the Danish Medical Association and others will be working to call attention to and action against such violations as have been seen of late in Turkey and Sudan -- where physicians and the medical records of torture survivors under treatment have been subject to abuse.

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