

Roundtable discussion summary

Moving from policy to action: Success stories on taking the environment and health agenda forward

Title of presentation: MAKING HOSPITALS SUSTAINABLE, GREEN AND SAFE

Brief description of advocacy campaign or activity:

Health Care Without Harm Europe encourages hospitals, medical doctors and nurses to change purchasing practices, i.e. introduce environmentally safe products and technologies, minimize waste output from their facilities or otherwise assist with changing the health care sector so that it is not source of harm from toxic materials to patients, health care workers and affected communities.

More specifically, we provide health care professionals and hospitals with tools on how to substitute for safer products and technologies which include information on available alternative products in various categories – medical devices, information on manufacturers who offer these products and case studies from progressive hospitals on how this change has been carried out.

Description of deliverables / outputs:

XCHANGE database – database on successful projects in form of case studies from various areas (substitution of PVC medical devices for safer alternatives, introducing energy efficient and energy saving practices in hospitals like reduction of laundry, substitution for safer cleaning products, introduction of organic food in hospitals, building green hospitals etc)

Database on Alternative Technologies to medical waste incineration – provides information on manufacturers, characteristics of the technology, list of facilities where these technologies have been installed.

Factsheets and scientific review study on PVC/phthalates hazards in hospitals jointly with description of alternative products and manufacturers available, case studies of successful substitution, review of political actions taken in Europe as well as outside of Europe

Guidelines on how to substitute PVC in hospitals, guidelines on how to carry out mercury thermometers exchange

Conference CleanMed Europe – green products and services. During the conference health care professionals, nurses and hospital employees as well as progressive companies, political representatives offered the opportunity to exchange information on success stories, learning about the new trends in this sector (green buildings, organic food, non-PVC policy at hospitals, environmentally harmless pharmaceuticals etc), award those that have already achieved significant success.

Description of factors making the activity a success:

- gaining powerful allies in hospitals – environmental managers, head of medical departments, head nurses and engaging them in active collaboration with HCWH
- providing sound scientific arguments to the health care professionals
- providing practical information on how to carry out the change and manifesting success stories achieved elsewhere, creating a platform for exchanging information in form of email list-serves, organizing conference on green products and practices

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- showing to political change-makers that the trends are clearly visible and stem from various regions, countries, continents

Lessons learned:

- health care sector is a large purchasing power that has the ability to shift markets toward sustainable production
- health care professionals can demonstrate the change through success stories and thus manifest the changes already done – this is the most encouraging example for lawmakers to amend the legislature so that these new standards are widely accepted
- health care providers are opinion-makers and are able to motivate other sectors to follow the same path. The health arguments are very powerful.
- Media attention is key and health care professionals including doctors, scientists and nurses can provide valuable insight to wider public through communication with media. NGOs have experiences with this and should channel this cooperation.
- Very useful to cooperate not only inside EU but also trans-atlantic cooperation – through pressuring multi-national manufacturers against double standards and demonstrating similar trends on both sides of Atlantic
- Educating health care professionals about the links between environment, health and their own practices.

Contact information:

Karolina Ruzickova

Health Care Without Harm Europe

Chlumova 17

130 00 Praha 3

Czech Republic

Tel +420 222 78 14 71

Fax +420 222 78 28 08

Email: karolina.ruzickova@hcwh.org

Web: www.noharm.org/europe