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INDEPENDENT, OBJECTIVE AND EVIDENCE-BASED

WHO Review

A first: WHO reviews national patient information website

In 2008, the German Institute for Quality and Efficiency in Health Care (IQWiG) invited the World Health Organization to evaluate the methods used by the Institute to develop patient information, as well as the quality and accuracy of that information. You can read about why the WHO believes that IQWiG's patient information is important, where they see room for improvement, and what other conclusions they came to here (URL: <http://www.informedhealthonline.org/index.642.en.html>).

About the WHO review

Why was the review initiated?

In 2003, when the UK's NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence) was around four years old, NICE invited the WHO to evaluate two of its work programmes. IQWiG was impressed with the rigour and usefulness of that evaluation (see: [NICE](http://www.nice.org.uk/Docref.asp?d=85797) (URL: <http://www.nice.org.uk/Docref.asp?d=85797>)). IQWiG invited the WHO to evaluate its health information programme when the Institute was also around four years old. The Institute wanted the WHO to assess the methods for selecting topics, evaluating evidence, developing patient information and the quality assurance and evaluation mechanisms. The quality and accuracy of the information itself was to be evaluated, and stakeholder views considered.

Who was on the review team?

The review was performed by a team of five international experts:

- Dr Kees de Joncheere (Coordinator of Team), Regional Advisor for Health Technology and Pharmaceuticals, WHO Regional Office for Europe, Copenhagen, Denmark
- Dr Gerald Gartlehner, Head of Department for Evidence-based Medicine and Clinical Epidemiology, Danube University, Krems, Austria
- Dr Laragh Gollogly, Managing Editor, Bulletin of the World Health Organization, Geneva, Switzerland
- Professor Pertti Mustajoki, Duodecim – Finnish Medical Society, Helsinki, Finland
- Dr Govin Permanand, Health Evidence Network, World Health Organization, Copenhagen, Denmark

When did the review happen and what did they look at?

The review was conducted in 2008 and 2009. The WHO experts conducted two site visits to IQWiG in Cologne, Germany in 2008. They reviewed documents and the Institute's website, conducted interviews with Institute staff and management, as well as a series of interviews with external stakeholders, including representatives of the German Ministry for Health, health insurers, patient and doctor organisations, and industry. Interviews were also held with experts who work with the IQWiG's Department of Health Information. The team selected three topics for health information and studied these in depth (allergies, asthma, and postnatal depression).

About WHO

The World Health Organization, the United Nations specialist agency for health, was established in 1948. WHO's objective, as set out in its Constitution, is the attainment by all peoples of the highest possible level of health. One hundred and ninety-three countries are WHO Member States. WHO Member States are grouped into six regions. The Regional Office for Europe is located in Copenhagen (URL: <http://www.euro.who.int/>). WHO Regional Offices conduct and coordinate the WHO's core functions at the regional level.

About IQWiG

The German Institute for Quality and Efficiency in Health Care (IQWiG) is a scientifically independent institute that was established under the 2004 health reform legislation to provide evidence-based advice for the German healthcare system, as well as independent patient information for patients and citizens. It publishes this information in two languages at www.gesundheitsinformation.de / www.informedhealthonline.org.

Full results of the WHO review can be found here (PDF): [WHO review](http://www.informedhealthonline.org/index.download.3f44361e9) (URL: <http://www.informedhealthonline.org/index.download.3f44361e9>)

Glossary

evidence

Evidence is what we call scientific proof from well-conducted, good-quality scientific trials that have been carefully designed to answer specific questions. Depending on the types of questions, different scientific research methods (types of study) are most appropriate to find reliable answers to these questions. Randomized controlled trials (RCTs), for example, are the best way to get reliable evidence on the effectiveness of medical treatments (interventions). This type of study, however, is not the best form of evidence for all possible questions, and does not provide the best answers to all kinds of questions, either. Epidemiological studies, for example, are very suitable for establishing well-founded proof for the spreading of a disease in the population.

asthma

Asthma (asthma bronchiale) is a permanent (chronic) disease with symptoms like coughing and breathlessness often occurring in acute attacks. In asthma, the airways are overly sensitive. The development of asthma is often associated with an overreaction to foreign substances or physical stimuli, frequently in connection with an allergy.

depression

Depression is one of the most common mental illnesses, and it can be mild, moderate or serious. There are several different types of depression that can be recognised by different signs. Which symptoms of depression occur and how strong and frequent they are vary from person to person. People in any social or age group can be affected, both women and men. If someone has had at least two of the following symptoms for longer than two weeks, it might mean that they are depressed: deep sadness; listlessness; loss of interest in the things they usually care about.

Sources

The German Institute for Quality and Efficiency in Health Care (IQWiG)

The German Institute for Quality and Efficiency in Health Care (IQWiG) was established by legislation to provide evaluations of the effectiveness, quality and efficiency of healthcare services. This includes the assessment of medicines as well as the publication of health information for consumers and patients.

Evidence basis of our health information

Our information is based primarily on systematic reviews of the effects of health care. Systematic reviews are necessary to gain an objective picture of health care. In order to do this, a clear question is formulated. Researchers then find all the relevant studies that could answer this question. They then evaluate those studies.

You can find a list of the evidence and other scientific literature on which this information is based at www.informedhealthonline.org

Disclaimer

This information was prepared and published by the German Institute for Quality and Efficiency in Health Care (IQWiG). It is based on the evidence and other scientific literature available at the time of publication. The information is intended for the use of patients in Germany. It is not intended to for use to diagnose illnesses and the information is not intended to substitute for medical advice.