



Discussion paper – EU Reflection Process on Chronic Disease

Response from the European Coalition on Homeopathic and Anthroposophic Medicinal Products

Introduction

The European Coalition on Homeopathic and Anthroposophic Medicinal Products (ECHAMP) warmly welcomes the Commission's efforts to develop a comprehensive approach to chronic conditions in the EU and the opportunity for stakeholders beyond the members of the European Health Policy Forum to feed into this process.

We are also pleased to note that this consultation is a request for initial input, which implies that stakeholders will be involved in the next steps of the process as well.

As producers of homeopathic and anthroposophic medicinal products, we believe that we have a contribution to make in this area. This short document highlights our views in relation to two topics of the Commission discussion paper, i.e. healthcare systems and research.

HEALTHCARE

The Consultation document asks what changes could be made to enable health systems to respond better to challenges of prevention, treatment and care of chronic diseases.

ECHAMP would like to focus on two main suggestions:

1 Patient choice and self-management of health

Homeopathic and anthroposophic medicinal products (HAMPs) are part of the two traditional European medical approaches, homeopathy and anthroposophic medicine. These have their part to play in responsible and sustainable medication and self-medication. For the sake of public health as well as the increasing emphasis on patient-centredness and patient-choice, these medicinal products should be considered a natural part of healthcare options and debates on the best ways to treat patients and provide the best possible care.

Individuals are increasingly vocal and determined to making their own choices. This is particularly pertinent in the field of healthcare where the traditional 'doctor knows best' paradigm is giving way to patients and consumers wanting to be actively involved with their own healthcare, treatment options and decisions. This is particularly pertinent in relation to chronic diseases, where the various stages of the patient pathway require different levels of involvement.



Currently over a 150 million EU citizens make use of HAMPs¹ and this number is on the increase.

The Commission discussion paper states that 'the role of the health care system as a supporter of patients to manage their own illness is one which is becoming increasingly important'. From the above, it is clear that the role of HAMPs cannot be underestimated in this respect.

2 *Integrated healthcare systems: a necessity for choice, safety and cost-effectiveness*

ECHAMP maintains that healthcare systems should be based on the principle of 'Integrated Healthcare', offering freedom of choice of healthcare, treatment and therapy, including homeopathy and anthroposophic medicine.

Not only are more and more citizens actively choosing to make use of these therapies; these products are also sustainable from an environmental, economic, safety and public health point of view. In the case of the increasing older population, a recent large scale survey², carried out in the Netherlands, demonstrates that patients whose GP has additional training in homeopathy, acupuncture or anthroposophic medicine have substantially lower health care costs and lower mortality rates. Two recent observational studies conducted in primary care practices in Germany³ showed a beneficial role of homeopathic and anthroposophic medical treatment in the long-term care of older adults. Apart from the fact that this outcome perfectly fits in with the aims of the Commission (e.g. in relation to the European Innovation partnership on healthy and Active Ageing) it is interesting news for any health insurance company and any government serious about wanting to reduce the soaring healthcare costs and increase life expectancy.

Indeed, finding alternatives for the strong prescription medicines with their many negative side effects - very often prescribed in to treat chronic diseases - would have a positive effect, both in terms of patient safety as well as in terms of better health outcomes. Moreover, these strong medicines are often taken in combination (poly-pharmacy) as a result of co-morbidity (especially within the older patient population). Medicines prescribed to older people have usually not been tested for their use and effect in this specific age group, and adverse drug reactions are common. Any measure that could be taken to improve this situation should be welcomed and stimulated.

Apart from their positive impact on the health of individuals, HAMPs would also have advantages in relation to finances, both for the patients themselves as well as for Member States' health budgets. Developing this product and services area should be considered as desirable health and societal innovation, which is in line with both health as well as individual requirements. In addition it will increase sustainability of health care provisions in general.

¹ source: Medizin Aspekte 2012: http://www.medizin-aspekte.de/2007/11/alternativmedizin_4354.html

² <http://members.ziggo.nl/peterkooreman/gpcs.pdf>

³ <http://www.biomedcentral.com/content/pdf/1471-2318-10-48.pdf>



RESEARCH

In its consultation document the Commission asks how research priorities should be changed to better meet the challenges of chronic disease. ECHAMP would like to share 3 suggestions:

1 Increase the budget for health research

As pointed out in earlier ECHAMP submissions in relation to research and innovation, we believe that the EU and national budgets allocated to health research should be enlarged considerably. Good health is the basis for individual well being, sustainable health and social security systems, thriving workforces and well functioning economies. Ensuring good health therefore would seem a crucial and basic condition for prosperity and growth. Health is also one of the basic requirements if the 'Europe2020' objectives are to be reached.

Health research – approached in an integrated and patient-centred way, including prevention, health promotion, treatment, care, health services delivery and health outcomes– would therefore seem to be one of the indispensable areas where EU research and innovation should focus. Furthermore, there is a need to investigate the attitude of patients consulting several healthcare providers in parallel, without informing the respective healthcare providers of their various treatments. The consequences for the health of the citizens, for healthcare provisions and for healthcare budgets should be investigated.

2 Health research should include homeopathy and anthroposophic medicine

In the area of treatment research, ECHAMP would like to urge the Commission to consider traditional allopathic treatment as well as complementary medicine in a spirit of integration and for the benefit of public health. EU level R&D can make a contribution to developing a plurality of health choices and promote access to and availability of the services that consumers and patients require and prefer.

The current lack of scientific openness towards innovation which can be offered by homeopathy and anthroposophic medicine is not in line with the opinion of a large number of (satisfied) users. Therefore, it would be useful to have more information about

- which specific health services and medicinal products are being used
- for what clinical symptoms and in which indications these are being used
- treatment effects, safety profile and the level of satisfaction and quality of life as a result of using these products
- level of access and availability of these medicinal products
- how many ADR's can be avoided by the integration of HAMP into healthcare provisions
- what could the socio-economic impact of such an integration be



Further developing the homeopathic and anthroposophic products and services area should be considered as desirable innovation, which is in line with better health, increased safety, individual requirements and personal choice.

3 The need to include health stakeholders in setting research priorities

ECHAMP also believes that it is important to include health stakeholders in determining research priorities, to ensure that research carried out is relevant for those that are working 'on the ground'.

What can ECHAMP do to contribute to address the current challenges?

ECHAMP, with its membership of leading manufacturers of homeopathic and anthroposophic products should be considered an expert in this area and we are ready and willing to offer this expert knowledge. Our association has close contacts with organisations representing patients, doctors, practitioners and researchers and is used to work in a multi-stakeholder environment.

Given the increasing interest of European citizens in more integrated health care alternatives to allopathic medicines, we feel that ECHAMP has a role to play in the further development of a future EU initiative on chronic disease and we would be happy to fulfil that role.