



Informed and educated patients contribute towards more effective healthcare

Contemporary medicine is characterized by innovative technology and requires an educated, broad-minded and ready doctor, but also an informed and educated patient. Getting medication to the patient is a complicated, expensive and time-consuming process. Efficacy and accessibility of new technology may affect patient awareness and interest. For these reasons, in 2012 the European patient education project EUPATI was founded. Slovakia has become part of it.

The objective of the EUPATI project, (European Patient's Academy,) in Slovak: Európska akadémia pacientov pre terapeutické inovácie, which was initiated by patients with significant support from the European commission, is to develop patient's and patient organization's education levels. The creation of the project was prompted by educational activities of individual patient organizations in Europe. The European commission, in cooperation with the European Patient Forum and the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations (EFPIA) undertook to coordinate and create this all-European platform. Together they created the private-public project EUPATI. Currently the project is supported by over thirty educational and scientific-research organizations, in addition to the already mentioned ones. Educational and development programs are covered directly from European Union and EFPIA resources.

Goals of EUPATI

At the onset of the project stood the understanding that contemporary medicine is developing dramatically and offers very broad and sophisticated options for new treatment methods. This unfortunately widens the divide between doctor knowledge and patient awareness. If the patient doesn't understand their treatment, this can have an adverse effect on their cooperation. From experience in medical practice it's apparent that treatment of an informed and educated patient is more effective than treatment of a patient whose attitude towards their treatment is ambivalent or naïve.

Beyond that, an educated patient has a positive motivating effect on doctors, who are encouraged in further education and personal development. Patients may also become part of the development of new medicine, which today is a complicated, time-consuming and expensive process. Patient contribution to the process of developing medicine might just be the factor that helps patients get their medication quicker. In initial phases of medicine development, the patient, that is, their disease, is the primary trigger for commencement of research. In the final phases of clinical trials, patients focus more on questions of efficacy, subjective difficulties and quality of life.

EUPATI thus set its goals:

1. To provide and transmit objective, open and truthful information about possible treatments, new medicine and their research and development,
2. To create educational programs, focused on building health literacy in patients,

3. To create a public internet library for patients, containing correct, current information about newest discoveries in medicine,
4. To provide education in the field of patient rights' as one of the most important tools of open informing.

Marica Laščeková, EUPATI learner and former VP of AOPP, said about the project: "The EUPATI project is great, it's unique. The goal of education is to create a group of advisors, who can help coordinate international projects and who become experts in the field of research and development of medicine and medical technology. At the same time they become patient advocates, who can present the interests of patients during the process," M. Laščeková said, concerning her position.

Slovakia and EUPATI

The EUPATI national contact team signed basic documents in August of 2015. Thanks to this, it could in cooperation with EUPATI leadership in Brussels, immediately launch the EUPATI National platform project, which currently includes the Slovak Medical University in Bratislava (SZU), the Association for the Protection of Patients' Rights (AOPP) and the ISPOR Slovakia scientific society as partners in Slovakia. The current National contact team EUPATI Slovakia representative for the project as a whole is Dominik Tomek, who is also VP of AOPP and who represents Slovakia in the European patient forum (EPF) in Brussels.

"Our first activity, with which we want to introduce ourselves to the professional and patient public, will be the first annual EUPATI conference "The patient and innovation in medicine", which is scheduled to take place in February of 2016," said D. Tomek. "At the same time it will be an opportunity to present possibilities for patient education, because an educated patient is a boon to the entire healthcare system. EUPATI is an educational project designed to be an open platform. We trust, and have received commitments, that further public, academic and healthcare institutions and personalities share our views on supporting patient education. "

The SZU has focused on patient education for several years already. "The last three years we have been implementing the 'The patient and the medicine' pilot program, with the goal of educating patients, but also identifying their problems. We devote great attention not only on patient's rights, but also their duties. We see the patient as a strategic partner. We consider the coordination and guarantee of an independent education, as well as their continuity, to be key for further development of quality in healthcare. SZU as a university with focus on the field in question, represents and offers ideal ground for the kind of activities envisioned by the Slovak European Patient's Academy. Cooperation within Slovakia is crucial..."stated prof. J. Holomáň – Head of the Institute of Pharmacology, clinical and experimental pharmacology of the Faculty of Medicine, SZU.

Research as the subject of education

EUPATI primarily focuses on the goal of educating patients in fields of research and development of medicines, their introduction, treatment, accessibility and medicine politics. The field of medicine today also deals with a number of important ethical questions, such as development of autonomous technology and artificial intelligence, which would help patients. Similarly important is the problematic of an aging populace and the needs of care for chronic illnesses, as well as protection from financial threats due to illness and misleading advertising. New and effective medication should be accessible to all those who require them.

Last (but not least) medical legislation, which is being synchronized in the European Union, but at the same time is constantly changing and being amended, can make it more difficult for patients to orient themselves. Education of patients in this field also has its irreplaceable position.

For more information:

EUPATI: www.patientsacademy.eu

AOPP: www.aopp.sk