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Patients' compliance with medicine should be at centre of pharma's business model - EFPIA

by Nick Smith

TALLINN, June 8 (APM) - Ensuring patients take their medicines as prescribed needs to be moved into the heart of pharma's business model, the European head of the industry has said in an address to wholesalers.

We need "patient adherence as part of the business model," director general of the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations (EFPIA), Richard Bergstrom told wholesalers meeting for their annual conference in Tallinn.

Bergstrom told GIRP - Europe's association of full-line wholesalers - there were parts of healthcare where wholesalers and pharma companies could work together, including securing the supply chain from counterfeited drugs.

While it was not clear how this would help wholesalers compensate for small and shrinking margins, Bergstrom also said there was scope for more pharmacy-based services.

This included medicines reviews to help ensure patients used drugs as directed - a potential source of income for wholesalers which were vertically integrated with pharmacies.

EFPIA already had "member companies which are teaming up with pharmacies", he said.

ONE-IN-FIVE SCRIPS NOT EVEN COLLECTED

EFPIA's head repeated industry's argument that used properly, drugs saved health systems money by reducing hospital and other costs later down the line.

Estonia's fully electronic prescription system has shown that some 20% of scrips issued are not even collected from a pharmacist (APMHE 23830)

While Bergstrom is now highlighting European pharma's involvement in medicines reviews, some EU governments have for a number of years been prepared to fund measures with the aim of improving compliance.

In the UK, pharmacists have taken on services designed to improve patient outcomes and funded by the government with additional money beyond that provided for traditional services.

However, delegates at GIRP heard that in Switzerland despite the success of some pharmacy-led schemes to improve the use of medicines, the government would only move money within the existing pool and would not fund the extra work.

Bergstrom suggested there was more space for pharma investing in such schemes, and the case for interventions "is compelling ... we need to invest in better measures" for compliance.

While GIRP continues to seek evidence to persuade the Europe and member-state governments to bolster wholesaler's role in the health, (APMHE 23871) many in the industry

believe the future lies in much broader models.

Delegates heard of one company which has signed a deal to deliver products for a perfume manufacturer, but little appears to be on offer outside of generating extra income via pharmacy services.

Speaking to APM, GIRP director general, Monika Derecque-Pois conceded this but noted that wholesalers did not need to own pharmacies to collaborate with them on additional services to sell to third parties.

This could include deals under which wholesalers provide equipment or similar to pharmacists looking to expand their role.

"Wholesalers can work with independents (pharmacists). It is more effort but is still a viable business," she said.

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