Safer healthcare in Europe: improving patient safety and fighting antimicrobial resistance

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The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety adopted the own-initiative report by Piernicola PEDICINI (EFDD, IT) on safer healthcare in Europe: improving patient safety and fighting antimicrobial resistance.

Members recalled that globally, **10 million people would die every year because of antimicrobial resistance** by 2050, and that resistance to antibiotics that were commonly used to treat causative bacteria was at least 25 % or more in several Member States.

In this context, Members set out the state of play on the Council's recommendations on patient safety and the Commission's second implementation report on the matter (please see the summaries set out in procedure reference 2013/2022(INI)). Members feedback and **proposals for improvements** include the following:

- ensure that health systems and healthcare facilities were managed independently of political choices, and that managers were appointed on the basis of merit and not of political affiliation;
- ensure basic training of all healthcare personnel, even those who were not in direct contact with patients;
- ensure the appropriate and up-to-date training of doctors and other healthcare professionals, as well as the exchange of best practices;
- ensure the adoption of a multidisciplinary approach in medical treatments;
- lighten the burden on healthcare facilities by promoting care and medical treatment at home;
- ensure that medical professionals inform patients when a medicine was used off-label and provide patients with information on the potential risks in order to enable them to give informed consent;
- promote information campaigns for patients concerning the risks of adverse events in the healthcare system and concerning possible preventive measures, starting with basic hygiene measures, and launch awareness-raising campaigns;
- step up hygiene precautions, making greater use of hygiene specialists to monitor all aspects of health and hygiene relating to healthcare facilities, patients and relations between patients and outside 'guests';
- develop EU guidance for patients' involvement in patient safety strategies.

With regard to the need to **fight against antimicrobial resistance**, Members proposed the following measures:

- remind physicians of the paramount importance of ensuring that the prescription of antibiotics for treatment was appropriate and responsible;
- ensure that, whenever possible, appropriate microbiological diagnosis was systematically performed before prescribing antibiotics;
- regulate the prescription of antibiotics for treatment;
- encourage the development of new revenue models whereby economic returns for companies were de-linked from prescribed volumes of antibiotics, and at the same time, while encouraging pharmaceutical innovation;
- regulate the sale and distribution of antibiotics;
- intensify infection control, in particular from a cross-border perspective, and especially by carefully monitoring potential carriage of multidrug-resistant bacteria;
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improve safety standards, especially for medical devices that are resistant to sterilisation (e.g. endoscopes);
- launch awareness campaigns targeting a wide audience
- increase public funding and create new academic positions to focus on exploring and validating new approaches for treating bacterial infections.

The committee also made a series of recommendations regarding antibiotic use in veterinary medicine in general and in husbandry in particular.

It went on to make recommendations on collaborative approaches within the EU, calling on Member States to cooperate on defining minimum patient safety standards and indicators for safety and quality of healthcare at the EU level. The Commission and the Member States were asked to further engage in **a dialogue with all stakeholders** and develop a coordinated, comprehensive and sustainable EU strategy for patient safety.

They were also asked to optimise EU partnerships between academia and the pharmaceutical industry, and Members encouraged pharmaceutical companies, governments and academia to contribute with their best assets (infrastructure, compounds, ideas and financial resources) to ground-breaking fundamental research and pre-competitive joint projects. The EU should take part in any global initiative aimed at improving ways of combating antibiotic resistance.

Lastly, Members stressed that **antimicrobial resistance had become a serious problem** that needed to be urgently tackled. It called on the Commission to consider proposing legislation on the prudent use of antibiotics if little or no progress had been made in Member States within five years of the publication of these recommendations.