

Education and Training Committee, 25 September 2008

Health Professionals Crossing Borders - Update

Executive summary and recommendations

Introduction

Healthcare Professionals Crossing Borders (HPCB) is an informal partnership of healthcare regulatory authorities in the EU and EEA, with a focus on patient safety. It exists to develop and promote proactive cooperation and collaboration in information exchange between European competent authorities. The HPC are regular participants and contributors to HPCB.

The attached paper provides information on the agreements developed by HPCB which HPC are signatories to, and indicates activities undertaken by the HPC to meet these agreements.

Decision

This paper is for information only. No decision is required.

Background information

For more information on HPCB and links to the Edinburgh and Portugal Agreements please go to: <http://www.hpcb.eu>

Resource implications

None

Financial implications

None

Appendices

None

Date of paper

15 September 2008

Introduction

Healthcare Professionals Crossing Borders is an informal partnership of healthcare regulatory authorities in the EU and EEA, with a focus on patient safety. It exists to develop and promote proactive cooperation and collaboration in information exchange between European competent authorities.

With a high level of professional mobility around Europe and potentially more patients seeking treatment abroad, regulators are keen to work cooperatively and collaboratively to contribute to safe healthcare in Europe.

Biannual meetings are held to discuss the on-going implementation of agreements and to facilitate cooperation and collaboration between competent authorities.

Edinburgh Agreement

A conference was held in Edinburgh in October 2005 (during the UK presidency of the EU), which succeeded in having a series of nine recommendations agreed. All signatories to the Agreement implemented all relevant areas by October 2007. Below are the recommendations most appropriate to the HPC and how we have met them.

Agreement 1

When a health professional needs to register with a competent authority in another country they are often required to provide evidence that they are registered elsewhere and also need to provide evidence of their current regulatory status on the relevant register. This includes current restrictions on an individual's right to practise, including interim suspension during an investigation.

A common template was agreed so that the information it contained is consistent across all competent authorities, irrespective of language. The certificate was known as the Certificate of Good Standing and is now known as the Certificate of Current Professional Status.

- Template adopted and has been used since August 2006.

Agreement 2, Agreement 3 and Agreement 5

Case-by-case exchange of information and proactive exchange of information.

- Articles 22 (10) and 3 (5)(b) of the Health Professions Order 2001 allow us to exchange information and cooperate with other competent authorities when it is in the public interest.
- Involved in the drafting of, and signatories to, the Memorandum of Understanding on Case-by-Case and Proactive Information Exchange.

This means that we have agreed to exchange fitness to practise information both reactively and proactively when appropriate. We

exchange information when a health professional's right to practise has been restricted because of serious performance, conduct, health or criminal issues. This is especially important when there are objective reasons to believe they may move in order to seek registration. Among others, we have worked successfully with the Norwegian Registration Authorities and the Kenyan Authorities.

Agreement 6

Access to information via websites.

- 'How to make a complaint about a health professional' has been translated in to 10 languages and is available on our website (<http://www.hpc-uk.org/accessibility/languages/>).
- We host and maintain www.healthregulation.org which provides links and information about competent authorities and professional bodies.

The Portugal Agreement

A meeting was held in Lisbon in October 2007. The aim of the meeting was to explore how successful different competent authorities had been in implementing the agreements of the Edinburgh Agreement. The delegates felt that most of the Agreements had been met and a further agreement would be beneficial.

The Portugal Agreement contains three main strands of collaborative activity for European health regulators to work together on. Similar to the Edinburgh Agreement, it is a voluntary and flexible package of actions that regulators can adopt as they are practically and legally able. The document focuses on 3 main strands of activity. Each has accessible information and information exchange as an underlying theme, in the context of professional or patient mobility in the European Single Market. The 3 strands of activity are:

Identifying shared principles of regulation

Despite the often complex differences between regulatory approaches some important shared values do exist between healthcare regulators. This work-strand aims to enable competent authorities to further identify where there are common or shared concepts and values of professional healthcare regulation.

Transparent and Accessible Healthcare Regulation

Making information about regulation and regulated professional more publicly available undoubtedly contributes to good, transparent and accountable healthcare regulation. This work-strand will enable competent authorities to share experience and good practice in making appropriate information more transparent and accessible to the public, healthcare employers and professionals, and adopting similar approaches as appropriate.

Competence Assurance of European Healthcare Professionals

High quality and safe healthcare in Europe relies on the assurance that health professionals are competent to practice. Some professional regulatory jurisdictions within and outside of Europe have developed mechanisms for the on-going competence assurance of healthcare professionals. This work-strand will enable regulators to identify and develop such mechanisms, as appropriate.

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