

Denmark

Guidance on expensive medicines

Danish Regions (DR) is the organisation that represents the interest of the five regions of Denmark. Each region owns the hospitals in that region. DR's overall mission is to represent the interests of the regions nationally and internationally. So two of its main duties are:

- to safeguard regional government interests within health care, hospitals, special education, regional development, environment and finances
- to speak on behalf of the regions to national government, the EU, other interest organisations and the media.

DR has set up a national council for the use of expensive medicine used only in hospitals, *Rådet for Anvendelse af Dyr Sygehusmedicin* (RADS), to ensure a more uniform use of expensive hospital medicines across hospitals and across the regions. The main task for RADS is to decide on a standard list of recommended drugs and guidelines for treatment. The council will form a number of expert sub-committees. The task for these is to create consensus on the choice of drugs through agreeing lists of recommended drugs and guidelines for treatment.

RADS will recommend drugs under three categories:

- groups of medicine whose use requires substantial expenditure by the hospitals
- groups of medicine whose use is characterised by a strong growth in expenditure
- new forms of medicine with a potential for becoming a substantial expenditure.

The goal is to offer patients equal and better access to treatment with expensive medicines only used in hospitals, through shared national guidelines for their use. It also gives potential for a better price through tenders for the medicine.

Gitte Søndergaard Nielsen, MSc Pharm

Croatia

Centralised preparation of cytotoxics

Varazdin General Hospital has 499 beds, it is built in the pavilion style (almost every department is in a separate building) and is located in a beautiful, rich baroque city with a population of 60,000 in a county of 120,000 inhabitants. The hospital has a central pharmacy from where medicines and other materials are supplied daily to the hospital wards. It is the second in terms of preparation of cytotoxic drugs after the hospital in Požega in Croatia.

On 26 January 2010 Varazdin General Hospital started centralised preparation of parenteral cytotoxic drug treatment in the hospital pharmacy. The pharmacy has a separate space to use as a clean room. Under aseptic conditions we can prepare chemotherapy on behalf of the patient. We now provide the treatment sterile, packaged and ready for use. It is prepared based on prescriptions from the oncology department and is delivered from the pharmacy to a special area where it is prepared for administration. We prepare about 30 treatments a day. In our hospital chemotherapy is administered in the haematology department and in the department for internal diseases.

The department team consists of one pharmacist and two pharmaceutical technicians, with another pharmacist who can always stand in as backup.

Mirjana Pticar Canjuga, MRPharmS

Czech Republic

Czech national congress of hospital pharmacists

The 13th Congress of Hospital Pharmacists was held in Brno, Czech Republic, in November 2009. More than 560 participants could listen to four keynote presentations and 27 oral presentations.

The main topic was pain and palliative care. Strong opioids are used for treatment of chronic pain, but not in sufficient quantities. Patients should benefit from modern methods of delivering opioids (TTS transdermal patches, OROS osmotic release tablets) and effective dosages.

Palliative care offers severely ill patients potentially highly effective techniques for improving the quality of life. It is necessary to explain to patients and relatives their situation at the end of life. Congress participants discussed what role hospital pharmacists should play in the palliative care system in the Czech Republic.

The workshop on evidence-based medicine attracted great interest. It disseminated skills and attitudes acquired at the EAHP Academy Summit held in Loughborough, UK, in 2009.

Oncology pharmacy was an important part of the Congress, participants interested in cytotoxic reconstitution discussed their experiences with decontamination of surfaces and medicines distribution boxes.

Many other topics were the subject of oral presentations (gene therapy, drug related problem counselling, analysis of used returned drugs) and posters. The Congress has a firm reputation as the most important professional event of the year.

Marek Lžicar, PharmD