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Speaking on World Alzheimer's Day (21 September), Dr. Roberto Frontini, President of the European Association of Hospital Pharmacists, called for European health systems to be made fit for purpose for the predicted rise in the numbers of patients with dementia in the next 15 years.

He said:

“With the number of people living with dementia worldwide expected to double by 2030 it is important that health policy makers and system designers in Europe give thought now to how we best meet the challenges ahead and take the right actions early.

“In the hospital setting this includes the education and training of professionals in understanding the impacts dementia may have in patient care. For example, we know that particular challenges can emerge with dementia relating to medication adherence - yet good adherence is essential for attempting to slow disease progression. It is important professionals are aware of this and of the methods available for improving compliance. More broadly, the enhanced care required for dementia patients in hospitals highlights the need to ensure adequate staffing levels. This must be taken into account in national Government decisions about health funding as well as discussions about European health workforce planning.

“The dementia challenge also poses the question of how best to achieve true multidisciplinary care. We know of problems that exist with over-prescription of anti-psychotics and that dementia medicines can create polypharmacy difficulties for elderly patients. As the hospital's resident expert in medication there is a key role here for the hospital pharmacist in improving medicines reconciliation. This role needs to be further realised across Europe and the planning for that should be accelerated across countries.

“Consideration also needs to be given to how we can best stimulate new research in the field of dementia medicine. Improvements proposed by the European Commission to the Clinical Trials Directive will go some way to assisting this, but there is still much more to be done. In that sense, the development of Horizon 2020, the European Union's future framework programme for Research and Development, will be important. The cost-benefits to health

systems from making advances in dementia medical research are almost self-evident.

“Finally, I commend the European Commission, Parliament and Council for the attention they have given this matter in recent years, and I hope there will be no lost momentum at the pan-European level. EAHP will continue to play its part by contributing the hospital pharmacy perspective to the discussion, identifying solutions as much as possible, and, through our educational activities, seek to ensure best practice approaches in Europe are shared across countries.”

ENDS

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. EAHP is an association of national organisations representing hospital pharmacists at European and international levels. More information about the EAHP and its history [here](#) [2].
2. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), nearly 35.6 million people live with dementia. This number is expected to double by 2030 (65.7 million) and more than triple by 2050 (115.4 million). Dementia affects people in all countries, with more than half (58%) living in low- and middle-income countries. By 2050, this is likely to rise to more than 70%.
http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2012/dementia_20120411/en/index.html [3]
3. In December 2008 the Council of the European Union published a document “Council Conclusions on public health strategies to combat neurodegenerative diseases associated with ageing and in particular Alzheimer's disease. The document emphasised the importance of “a multidisciplinary, multiprofessional and multisectoral approach” in providing good care to dementia patients, and that “a significant improvement in cooperation and the coordination of research efforts within the EU” needed to occur in relation to Alzheimer's disease research.
http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/lsa/104778.pdf [4]
4. In July 2009 the European Commission published a Communication on Alzheimer's disease and other dementias confirming that the European Union would support national efforts in key areas such as prevention, early diagnosis, the coordination of research and the sharing of best practice.
http://ec.europa.eu/health/archive/ph_information/dissemination/documents/com2009_380_en.pdf [5]
5. In January 2011, the European Parliament passed a resolution on a European initiative on Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. This supported the Commission's July 2009 Communication and the proposals that dementia be made an EU health priority and that Member States develop dedicated national plans and strategies.
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&language=EN&reference=P7-TA-2011-0016> [6]

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Links

[1] <https://www.eahp.eu/contact/info/eahp/eu> [2] <http://www.eahp.eu/about-us> [3]
http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2012/dementia_20120411/en/index.html [4]
http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/lsa/104778.pdf [5]
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