

## **HOW HOSPITALS IN 13 EUROPEAN COUNTRIES IN 2005 MATCH UP TO ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP NETWORK'S CHARTER OF 14 PATIENTS' RIGHTS**

### **1. Right to preventive measures**

Preventive medical practices are almost non-existent in European hospitals (except screening for female cancers).

### **2. Right of access to healthcare**

Access to hospitals is good in all countries (except Portugal and Greece). But, in many instances, patients are unable to obtain medicines not yet authorised for use in their country (despite the drugs being available in neighboring states).

### **3. Right to information**

The mechanisms for supplying information to patients are fairly uniform among the 13 countries. But the information provided is limited. Only France and the Netherlands offer data on patient satisfaction and clinical performance. Publicly-available information about waiting lists and patients' complaints is mostly unavailable in nine of the 13 countries.

### **4. Right to consent**

Standard forms for patients' consent to participate in scientific research are unavailable in Denmark, the Netherlands and Sweden.

### **5. Right to free choice**

Doctors in most of Europe's healthcare systems are required to obtain informed patient consent to prescribe particular treatments. Patient choice of treatment or treatment providers, however, is limited.

### **6. Right to privacy and confidentiality**

Many cases of the following are reported: a.) terminally-ill patients forced to remain in public wards; and b.) disclosure of personal medical information to unauthorised personnel.

### **7. Right to respect patients' time**

Waiting times for operations vary significantly between the 13 countries. Only Denmark and the Netherlands cap the length of waiting times. Reports of illnesses worsening because of delays, or patients turning to the private sector because they could wait no longer, are common.

### **8. Right to the observance of quality standards**

All of the 13 countries have health performance standards. Those of Denmark, the Netherlands and Sweden are the most demanding. No countries utilised input from patients or the public.

### **9. Right to safety**

All of the 13 countries have measures to reduce hospital-borne infections and to oversee the health risks that follow transfusions. But few hospitals regularly check to see whether their tests and treatments remain state of the art.

### **10. Right to innovation**

Hospitals in only five of the 13 countries use electronic systems for patient records, appointments and referrals. The most primitive of Europe's various forms of electronic healthcare communication can be found in Finnish, Greek, Irish, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish institutions.

### **11. Right to avoid unnecessary suffering and pain**

Hospitals in seven of the 13 countries are reported to be denying patients appropriate pain relief.

### **12. Right to personalised treatment**

Few hospitals cater for the needs of patients who require religious or psychological support, or impart treatment that is appropriate for the terminally ill, or for victims of violence. Most hospitals, however, meet the demands made upon them by children.

### **13. Right to complain**

Most complaints procedures are inadequate, with a slow (or even absent) rate of response. Few are independent.

### **14. Right to compensation**

Doctors and hospitals in all 13 countries (except Greece) carry insurance that contains provisions for patient compensation in the case of medical negligence or errors. Six countries (Denmark, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain) do not give patients access to free legal aid.