

EAHP Opinion on Patient Information

Data holds power and is essential for many different reasons. Health data is particularly sensitive and thus subject to strict rules. Healthcare professionals who are bound by the obligation of medical secrecy provide an additional layer of protection. The digitalisation of healthcare is not only revolutionising treatment options but also impacting patient information which in the past has been defined as the health information contained in health records that is vital for the work of healthcare professionals, including hospital pharmacists. In a digitalised world, the scope of patient information is however growing. Their (health) data is no longer only stored in health records but is increasingly linked to apps or other digital tools.

For the European Association of Hospital Pharmacists (EAHP) and its members, it is paramount that sensitive data is adequately protected. Measures should be put in place that ensure the safety of patient information derived from applications and barcodes as well as from electronic health records.

Patient information derived from applications and barcodes

Undoubtedly many potential opportunities exist from both current applications and future ones in relation to improving individual patient understanding and self-management for their prescribed treatments. However, care and vigilance must be taken in relation to sharing patient information via applications due to the lack of oversight and sometimes insufficient digital literacy on the side of the user.

Hospital pharmacists as frontline healthcare professionals are best placed to inform patients of the pitfalls that applications and barcodes hold. To ensure that they remain abreast of all the latest developments, **EAHP calls on governments and health systems to give adequate support to healthcare professionals in keeping their digital health competencies up to date.** A specific focus should be put on the promotion of digital health literacy among healthcare professionals and patients.

Both applications and barcodes – like 2D data matrix codes and QR codes – can be used to gain valuable insights into the behaviours of their users. Barcodes that are included on medicinal products and medical devices as well as health and wellness applications must ensure the individual's right to privacy. **This covers the prevention of the identification or tracking of individuals and prohibiting the use of information generated via barcodes and applications for commercial purposes.**

Data derived from electronic health records

Health records – especially when made available electronically – offer significant opportunities for improving safety, quality and efficiency in the delivery of patient care, particularly, but not exclusively, for preventing medication errors, keeping track of immunisation records and improving interface management of patient care. The importance of the protection of patient data needs to be one of the key considerations, wherefore stringent data protection rules must be adhered to.

In addition to safeguarding patient information contained in electronic health records, it must also be ensured that hospital pharmacists can access this information. Not only would this support the seamless transfer of patient care between healthcare settings, but it would also facilitate clinical services conducted by hospital pharmacists at

admission, an inpatient period and discharge, like medicine reconciliation or medication therapy management. **EHP urges national authorities to provide access to health records of patients to hospital pharmacists.**