

Press Release

EU Health Commissioner speaks to European Healthcare Distributors on Digital Technology, Big Data and Falsified Medicines

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Madrid, Spain – The 58th Annual Meeting and Conference of European Healthcare Distribution Association (GIRP) is underway this morning with EU Health Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis delivering a keynote speech through a video message.

Speaking to a large audience of healthcare distributors, figure heads from the pharmaceutical industry and other healthcare body representatives, EU Commissioner for Health, Vytenis Andriukaitis, honed on 3 key issues – Digital Technology, Big Data and the Falsified Medicines Directive.

“Digital technology is now an established and integral feature of modern society and you must be at the forefront in creating the right conditions for allowing digital development to flourish”, the Commissioner highlighted. The European Commission will launch new initiatives based around 3 themes: “First, to give effect to the right of every citizen to access and share securely their personal health data; second, to support the development of a secure data infrastructure with the pulling of health data to advance research, disease prevention and personalized health and care, and third, to facilitate interaction between patients and healthcare providers.”

“Big Data plays an increasingly important role in medical and clinical world” the Commissioner said. Through the European reference networks, he informed that “we are pulling expertise to provide faster diagnosis and better treatments for patients affected by rare, low-prevalence and complex diseases. At the same time, these networks will create valuable data sets for research and clinical trials.” In pharmaceuticals, the “collection and aggregation of primary health data, coming from, for example, biobanks, or electronic health records, enable a better understanding of disease characteristics and progression. It also helps the recruitment of patients for designing and conducting targeted clinical trials.”

Alluding to the Falsified Medicines Directive and the adoption of the safety features, the top EU health official acknowledged how the setting up of the repositories system has been a challenging task. In his closing remarks, the Commissioner thanked the members of GIRP for their active contribution to set up the European hub. “I trust we can count on your active participation at national level to complete these tasks” he said and continued, “You and your members have a central and crucial role to play in making the supply chain safer and I look forward to seeing the system up and running in February 2019.”

Monika Derecque-Pois, Director General of GIRP, thanked the Commissioner for his kind words and remarks and picking-up on his messages on Digital Technology and Big Data, she said “we see huge potential for our members to support healthcare systems and patients with developments in health technology and big data”. The members of GIRP, many of which are integrated distributors of healthcare products and services, are well positioned to take on some of the challenges in this area and exploit many of the emerging opportunities that can help deliver real value to healthcare system and benefit to patients. Our position in the healthcare supply

chain places us at a vantage point to be key players in many of the developments in the health technology and big data areas.

Building on this: "We are working hard to better assess the opportunities in this area". On 25 -26 January 2018, GIRP will host a major high-level conference as part of its ambition to create a platform which is open to all actors interested in health technology and big data in health to come together to exchange up to date thinking, ideas, challenges and opportunities in this space. We hope the occasion can broker new contacts and partnerships in the pharmaceutical supply chain and healthcare sector as a whole, by bringing together actors across the board to develop tangible real-life initiatives beneficial for the people we serve and value for those that help serve them."

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European Healthcare Distribution Association (GIRP)

GIRP, the European Healthcare Distribution Association, is the umbrella organisation for pharmaceutical full-line wholesalers and distributors of healthcare products and services in Europe. It represents the national associations of over 750 pharmaceutical wholesalers serving 32 European countries, as well as major international and pan-European healthcare distribution companies. GIRP members employ over 140,000 people and distribute around 15 billion packs of medicines as well as a wide range of healthcare products per year. As the vital link in healthcare, they are committed to developing and providing innovative and efficient healthcare products and services to improve health and wellbeing of patients across Europe.