

## Pan-European body to encourage patient compliance

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A group of top pharmaceutical packaging companies and drug manufacturers has established a not-for-profit organisation to promote packaging initiatives that encourage patient compliance worldwide.

According to figures highlighted by Stora Enso at a recent pharmaceutical packaging seminar, 125,000 lives are lost annually in the US alone due to patient failure to comply with medicine regimens. Speaking on the launch of the European Health Care Compliance Packaging Council (European HCPC), the organisation's chairman Thomas Dries (who is Healthcare Market manager at Honeywell Speciality Films) said poor adherence to drug regimes, particularly when treating life-threatening illnesses such as cardiovascular disease, HIV and cancer, was "a problem observed everywhere". "Non-compliance not only puts patients at risk, but generally reduces their quality of life and wastes healthcare resources," he argued.

"It has been conclusively proven that user-friendly drug packaging – one of the key initiatives this organisation will promote – is an effective and often low-cost way of encouraging compliance. Recent evaluations have shown that with anti-malarial drug therapy, for instance, over 80% of patients using a numbered blister pack completed their treatment, in contrast to just 65% of those receiving drugs loose."

Dries added that poor communication at the physician/patient and pharmacist/ patient "interfaces", and particularly the "not uncommon" failure of healthcare professionals to discuss with patients the full benefits and drawbacks of medication was another significant reason for non-compliance: "Packaging can assist the patient and physician by increasing the likelihood of successful treatment," he explained.

The European HCPC's establishment was instigated by Tassilo Korab of Teich in 2001, with the board elected last June and its first meeting held this May. The 11 founder companies are: Aerni Leuch, Alcan, Amcor, Brecon Pharmaceuticals, Cardinal Health, Honeywell, IMA, Novartis Pharma, Prodieco Pharmaceutical Components, Teich and Uhlman PacSysteme.

"Any improvements we suggest will be strictly scientifically and evidence-based," adds Dries. "Our aim is to be multi-disciplinary and open-minded, to function ethically – in accordance with anti-trust laws, and to take a pedagogical, communication-oriented approach."

Among the first initiatives planned are a project with the University of Vienna examining "the elderly patient and pharmaceutical packaging" and an "interdisciplinary" compliance conference next year. "We will also be undertaking professional networking with Brussels and healthcare organisations and looking to provide useful, solid data to those needing it on the impact of packaging on medicines," Dries explains.

Full membership is open to any corporation, partnership, sole proprietorship or other business involved in drug packaging manufacture, pharmaceutical packaging material supply, machinery for producing, printing or laminating pharmaceutical packaging, and contract packers.

Companies, partnerships or individuals undertaking commercial, educational or scientific activities to promote the organisation's aims are eligible for associate membership.

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