

International Patient Organizations Present First-Ever Patient-Centered Care Definition, Principles



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NEW YORK, March 30 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- The International Alliance of Patients' Organizations (IAPO), in collaboration with the U.N. NGO Health Committee, hosted a day-long forum today to discuss international issues affecting patients' organizations and presented the IAPO Declaration on Patient-Centered Healthcare. The IAPO Declaration outlines the key principles of patient-centered healthcare as agreed upon by a consortium of leading international patients' organizations. In addition, IAPO presented findings on the evidence-based need for an increased focus on patient-centered initiatives within healthcare.

Throughout the day, U.N. NGO Health Committee members and representatives from international patients' organizations met with healthcare professionals, academics and other stakeholders in an unprecedented attempt to meet the challenge of promoting the practice of patient-centered healthcare in universal terms and determined actions to help transform healthcare systems worldwide. Meeting attendees supported the IAPO Declaration and its principles, evaluated international case studies and reviewed best practices in advocacy of patient-centered healthcare.

The IAPO Declaration framed the discussion and outlined patients' and patients' organizations definition as the key principles of patient-centered healthcare (see end of release). Afterwards, attendees formally endorsed and accepted the Declaration as the defining document for patient-centered healthcare principles. Overriding principles include: Respect for patients' unique needs and fundamental right to health care and their preferences for health care providers; Patients' choice and empowerment; Patients' involvement in health policy; Patients and their organizations must have access to safe services and support; and Patients' right to access healthcare information.

"Chronic diseases currently account for almost half of the global burden of disease and health systems in world regions cannot cope if they continue to focus on the disease rather than the patient. This declaration helps to universally define this important issue and gives voice to patient concerns," explained Albert van der Zeijden, Chair of IAPO and U.N. NGO Health Committee Representative.

During the forum, Stephen McMahon, Chairman of the Irish Patients Association presented a 2006 study that revealed perceptions of healthcare among patient organization members in 10 EU member States, Canada and Nigeria and demonstrated a need for patient-centered healthcare and universal terms to define its parameters. About 98% of respondents agree that "because timing is so important in the prevention of disease, access to the most effective medicines is

essential." Moreover, 95% of the members' surveyed demanded a right to participate as partners in making healthcare decisions.

"When patients are passive subjects of healthcare provision rather than partners in its delivery, providers are not able to deliver the quality of care that patients need," explains Myrl Weinberg, IAPO's Chair Elect. "Therefore, patients should be involved in setting the healthcare, and this meeting will help set an international health agenda for patients around the world."

About the International Alliance of Patients' Organizations

The International Alliance of Patients' Organizations (IAPO) is a unique global alliance representing patients of all nationalities across all disease areas and promoting patient-centered healthcare around the world. Our full members are patients' organizations working at the international, regional, national and local levels to represent and support patients, their families and caregivers. IAPO's vision is that patients throughout the world are at the center of healthcare.

IAPO Declaration on Patient-Centered Healthcare

Health systems in all world regions are under pressure and cannot cope if they continue to focus on diseases rather than patients; they require the involvement of individual patients who adhere to their treatments, make behavioral changes and self-manage. Patient-centered healthcare may be the most cost-effective way to improve health outcomes for patients.

To us, the International Alliance of Patients' Organizations, the essence of patient-centered healthcare is that the healthcare system is designed and delivered to address the healthcare needs and preferences of patients so that healthcare is appropriate and cost-effective. By promoting greater patient responsibility and optimal usage, patient-centered healthcare leads to improved health outcomes, quality of life and optimal value for healthcare investment.

Patients', families' and health care providers' priorities are different in every country and in every disease area, but from this diversity we have some common priorities. To achieve patient-centered healthcare we believe that healthcare must be based on the following Five Principles:

1. Respect - Patients and health care providers have a fundamental right to patient-centered healthcare that respects their unique needs, preferences and values, as well as their autonomy and independence.
2. Choice and empowerment - Patients have a right and responsibility to participate, to their level of ability and preference, as a partner in making healthcare decisions that affect their lives. This requires a responsive health service which provides suitable choices in treatment and management options that fit in with patients' needs, and encouragement and support for patients and health care providers that direct and manage care to achieve the best possible quality of life. Patients' organizations must be empowered to play meaningful leadership roles in supporting patients and their families to exercise their right to

make informed healthcare choices.

3. Patient involvement in health policy - Patients and patients' organizations deserve to share the responsibility of healthcare policy-making through meaningful and supported engagement in all levels and at all points of decision-making, to ensure that they are designed with the patient at the centre. This should not be restricted to healthcare policy but include, for example, social policy that will ultimately impact on patients' lives. See IAPO's Policy Statement at: <http://www.patientsorganizations.org/involvement>.

4. Access and support - Patients must have access to the healthcare services warranted by their condition. This includes access to safe, quality and appropriate services, treatments, preventive care and health promotion activities. Provision should be made to ensure that all patients can access necessary services, regardless of their condition or socio-economic status. For patients to achieve the best possible quality of life, healthcare must support patients' emotional requirements, and consider non-health factors such as education, employment and family issues which impact on their approach to healthcare choices and management.

5. Information - Accurate, relevant and comprehensive information is essential to enable patients and health care providers to make informed decisions about healthcare treatment and living with their condition. Information must be presented in an appropriate format according to health literacy principles considering the individual's condition, language, age, understanding, abilities and culture. See IAPO's Policy Statement at <http://www.patientsorganizations.org/healthliteracy>.

To achieve patient-centered healthcare at every level in every community, the International Alliance of Patients' Organizations is calling for the support and collaboration of policy-makers, health professionals, service providers, and health-related industries to endorse these Five Principles and to make them the centre of their policies and practice. We call upon all stakeholders to provide the necessary structures, resources and training to ensure that the Principles outlined in this Declaration are upheld by all. International Alliance of Patients' Organizations

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