HCPC Europe’s 5th Annual Conference on Patients’ Adherence/Compliance Abstract

HCPC Europe, a not-for-profit organisation whose mission is to assist and educate the healthcare sector in the improvement of patient compliance through the use of packaging solutions, invites participants to its annual conference, which this year will take place at the Millennium Hotel in London on November 3 and 4. The conference focuses on the return on investment of innovative compliance/adherence-enhancing medicinal packaging, as well as the benefits for patients, the healthcare system and the pharmaceutical industry. Heneghan, Glasziou and Perera found in their study about the role of packaging with regard to long term medicinal treatment that: “People often miss taking prescribed medication, because of forgetfulness, changing medication schedules or busy lifestyles. It is estimated that between 40% and 60% of people do not take medication as prescribed, which can lead to worse health outcomes. Packaging of medications with reminder systems for the day and/or time of the week is an attempt to help people take long-term medications.”

While it will be difficult to influence some of the causes for non-compliance/adherence, the main factor – forgetfulness – can rather easily be dealt with. Calendar drug packages, or innovative packs incorporating a chip with reminder functions, capable of communicating with a central database, are commercially available and designed to help patients to adhere to their therapies.

An essential element of the conference is an award for novel pack design for supporting patients’ adherence to medicinal therapy. The jury consists of members of HCPC Europe’s advisory board, and the board will have to decide between a large number of entries encompassing creative low-cost solutions as well as most sophisticated high tech drug delivery systems/packaging.

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Everyone involved in patient care, including the patient himself, loses when a prescribed medicinal therapy is discontinued early, instead of continuing with the medicine for the intended period of time, which is often meant to be lifelong. The patient who stops taking the medicine is deprived of its therapeutic benefits. The third party payer may save some money on drug costs, but incurs whatever added costs arise from the absence of the drug’s therapeutic effects, plus costs that may arise if the discontinuation escapes clinical recognition.

The European HCPC a not-for-profit organisation whose mission is to assist and educate the healthcare sector in the improvement of patient compliance through the use of packaging solutions, was set up between the pharmaceutical, the packaging and the machinery industries with the assistance of patient organisations, driven by the awareness that healthcare systems are losing enormous sums of money through medication that is taken improperly or not at all. Thoughtful packaging of medicines, the founders and members of HCPC Europe argue, can in itself play a significant part in patient compliance and, by organising as a body, HCPC Europe can be effective in promoting packaging-related initiatives which will help improve patient compliance.

New models for cost coverage of medicines underline the importance of HCPC Europe’s initiatives. Last year’s conference, which took place at the Basel City facilities of the Institute of Pharma Technology at the FHNW School of Life Sciences in Basel, Switzerland, concentrated on a Voice of the Patient survey carried out by HCPC Europe and the European Patients’ Forum (umbrella organisation of European patients’ organisations representing 150 million patients). This year’s conference, scheduled to take place on November 3 and 4 at the Millennium Knightsbridge Hotel in London, will focus on the implementation and commercial use by the pharmaceutical industry of the many clever ideas presented for the Columbus Award, ranging from low-cost solutions using conventional technology combined with clever design, to highly sophisticated electronically-assisted drug delivery systems. And as in previous years, HCPC are again expecting many exciting and innovative entries for the Columbus Award 2010.

Top experts in the matter of healthcare will discuss the benefits of improved patient compliance and how it can contribute to more effective use of medicines and to better outcomes. At the Conference in Basel last year, Steve Richmond, head of global packaging at AstraZeneca, addressed “The Value of Packaging to Patients” and underlined the importance of making drug packaging part of the treatment. “To be the industry leader in serving patients and delivering value, AstraZeneca is embracing change in a world that is changing faster than any time before. Improving patient compliance is at the same time a challenge and a huge opportunity, and the task is clear: assist patients to remember to take their medicine. A large number of aspects need to be considered like portability, sustainability, aesthetics, the way of presenting information etc.” He concluded: “solutions are available. They just need to be implemented.”

Andrew Degnan, Process Development Manager at Chesapeake Pharmaceutical and Healthcare Packaging, stated that a market pull was needed to meet the technology push in order to get these innovations implemented.

This is where the conference in London is precisely aimed at. Patients have often expressed their concerns about pharmaceutical pack design, and that their needs and requirements were too often neglected. In particular, those
whose non-adherence to their therapy could potentially be life-threatening wish to get more support, and complain that their requests regarding compliance-enhancing packaging are met insufficiently or not at all. The community of chronic myeloid leukemia patients has a great deal of experience in this. Jan Geissler, part of this community and Director of the ECPC - European Cancer Patient Coalition considers packaging “a very important topic [which] I have quite a strong opinion on. For example, some oral cancer drug manufacturers are currently switching to bottles, which is a nightmare in terms of compliance/adherence. Some do blisters of 10 pills which never divides well on a seven pills/week schedule. Cardboard blisters are troublesome to remove single pills, and often damage the whole blister when trying to remove one pill. So there are issues,” he argues.

HCPC Europe serves as a platform for patients to make themselves heard. At the same time it is a forum for packaging engineers and pack designers to learn about innovative solutions which are designed to help patients in their medicinal regimens, and a place for executives of the pharmaceutical industry to liaise with peers about their experiences and the benefits of enhanced adherence.

Simon Exell, Merck Serono International (CH), will speak about Adherence Monitoring in Chronic Injectable Therapy.

Dr Kamal Mahtani BSc PhD MBBS, University of Oxford (UK), will tell the audience about the effectiveness of Reminder Packaging for Improving Adherence to Self-Administered Long-Term Medications.

Søren Skovlund, Novo Nordisk (DK), will explain why the pharmaceutical industry has an interest in improving patients’ compliance.

Dr Isabelle Moulon, Head of Medical Information, European Medicines Agency (UK), will give an insight as to how pharmaceutical packaging can benefit patients and the healthcare sector from an EMA perspective.

Sandy Craine, CML Support Group, European Cancer Patient Coalition (UK), aims to influence and effect real change in healthcare policy at both a national and a European level. She will share her experience of why patients might not be compliant/adherent.

Peter Behner, Vice President at Booz & Companies (DE), one of the leading consulting companies in the world specialising in healthcare matters describes ways to enhance Patient Treatment Compliance with Product Specifications.

The Conference will also include a declaration from the following Directors and members of the Board of HCPC-Europe about the future strategy how to encourage the industry to implement innovative solutions designed to assist patients in their therapies.

These include:
- Phill Marley (Packaging Account Manager, AstraZeneca, Global Operations (UK))
- Norman Niven (CEO, Protomed (UK))
- Chris Johnson (VP Alliances and Marketing, Cypak (SE))
- Chair, 11073-104772 Medication Monitoring ISO/IEEE
- Vice Chair, Continua Marketing

At the end of day two the Columbus Award will be given to the company presenting the best and most effective new pharmaceutical pack.

We are all working together to set the agenda for change in managing patient compliance throughout Europe.

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