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WEEKLY EU HEALTHCARE NEWS UPDATE

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EUROPEAN COMMISSION: REVISION OF EU ORPHAN MEDICINES LEGISLATION TO BE ADOPTED IN THE COMING MONTHS

On Tuesday (8 November), the head of the EU Commission's health department's (DG SANTE) unit for medical products Anna-Eva Ampelas, participated in the meeting of the European Parliament's ENVI committee responsible for the issues related to health. She announced, without providing a specific date, that the proposal for the revision of orphan medicinal products legislation is expected to be adopted „in the coming months”, even though the revision was postponed several times.

Ampelas added that the new proposal for the legal framework of orphan drugs would come along with other essential legislative actions included in the new pharmaceutical strategy for Europe, such as the revision of general pharmaceutical legislation and the bill on paediatric medicines, as diseases found in children are mostly considered rare diseases as well. At the meeting of the ENVI Committee, a representative of DG SANTE added that the Commission has finalised the impact assessment, completed public consultations and is “now in the internal scrutiny phase of the impact assessment.”

Commission and Members gathered at the meeting agree that the orphan drugs regulation has had some success in boosting the development of medicinal products for rare diseases. On the other hand, the affordability of orphan medicines remains a challenge for healthcare systems. There is also unequal access to pharmaceuticals and insufficient incentives for developing new orphan medicines.

Source: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/health-consumers/news/proposal-to-revise-eu-orphan-medicines-legislation-expected-next-month-says-commission/>

EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENT AGENCY: HEATWAVES IN EUROPE COULD KILL AS MANY AS 90,000 PEOPLE PER YEAR BY 2100

A recently published report prepared by the European Environment Agency (EEA) indicates that Europe is ill-prepared to cope with the healthcare crisis resulting from climate change and an ageing society. The environmental crisis means Europe will see more frequent heat waves but is also more likely to experience new outbreaks of diseases such as dengue or malaria.

The authors of the report underlined that “without adaptation measures, and under a scenario of 3 degrees Celsius global warming by 2100, 90,000 Europeans could die from extreme heat annually.” However, it has been also pointed out that “with 1.5 degrees C global warming, this is reduced to 30,000 deaths annually.” It is worth mentioning that countries have already pledged to keep global warming to a maximum of 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. Nevertheless, the world is set to miss that goal on current emission trends.

Citing insurance data, the agency claimed that about 129,000 Europeans died as a result of excessive heat in the period between 1980 and 2020. Factors such as deteriorating climate change, ageing population and increased urbanisation are likely to increase the frequency of heatwaves, and therefore the number of fatal cases may also grow in the coming years, especially in the south of Old Continent.

Beyond the danger of heat itself, the agency said, climate change could also make Europe more prone to infectious diseases, including malaria and dengue fever spread by mosquito bites.

Source: <https://www.politico.eu/article/aging-europe-not-ready-climate-impact/>

WHO AND WHPA JOIN FORCES TO SUPPORT HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS

The World Health Organisation has signed a memorandum of understanding with the five member organisations of the World Health Professions Alliance (WHPA). This landmark event brought together five global associations representing dentists, pharmacists, nurses, physiotherapists and physicians to strengthen collaboration with the WHO for the protection and investment in the health workforce.

Altogether, the five organisations in question represent more than 41 million health system professionals worldwide and bring together the essential knowledge and expertise of key health practitioners in more than 130 countries. These include the following organisations:

- International Council of Nurses (ICN),
- International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP),
- World Confederation for Physical Therapy,
- World Dental Federation (FDI World Dental Federation),
- World Medical Association (WMA).

WHPA and WHO were already implementing common objectives before and during the pandemic. Both organisations worked to ensure that health workers in all countries received vaccinations and took steps to strengthen health systems, including by ensuring better working environments and decent working conditions for health professionals.

Source: https://www.who.int/news/item/07-11-2022-WHO_WHPA_MOU

Thank you for your attention!

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