

## EVENT FOR THE PRESENTATION OF SFEE's CODE OF ETHICS

### MAIN POINTS OF SPEECHES

#### **Andreas Lykourantzou, Minister of Health (Salutation)**

Thank you for your kind invitation to attend the presentation of the new, updated Code of Ethics and Transparency by the Hellenic Association of Pharmaceutical Companies (SFEE).

Despite my desire to attend and speak at the meeting, it is impossible to be physically present because of my scheduled meeting with the head of the Regional Office for Europe of the World Health Organisation, Mrs. Zsuzsanna Jakab, in Copenhagen.

As we all know, after decades of massive foreign borrowing, the chronic demagogic management of financial resources, the inflated bureaucracy of the state, the timidity in utilising our mineral and energy wealth, and our animosity towards the competitive productive entrepreneurial activity, our homeland is ravaged by a deep economic crisis, showing an unprecedented revenue shortfall, which affects the health sector.

Despite the selfish, demagogic reactions to every attempt of reformation and development in competitiveness, the Ministry of Health does not compromise with the vested interests and the well-known pathologies of the past. Instead, it combats waste, corruption and opaqueness, rejects the bureaucratic glitches and other chronic malfunctions in health care and has already initiated reforms necessary for the overall improvement of the health sector.

Reverting to this timely meeting, I must say that over-prescription, over-exposure in medicines and the irrational pursuit of profit, do not reflect the actual medical and pharmaceutical needs of a patient, they degrade the quality of health services and undermine the public interest.

I believe that the new updated Code of Ethics and Transparency moves in a positive manner and adopts more stringent criteria in the operation of the pharmaceutical enterprises, contributing SFEE's fight against the aforementioned unacceptable and unsound conditions in the trade of medicines.

The interesting and relevant positions of the SFEE are amenable to consultation with the Ministry of Health, the EOF and other relevant agencies in the drug industry, in order to jointly formulate more effective actions in the interest of transparency and, furthermore, to the benefit of Public Health.

For example, mandatory disclosure in the internet of detailed data for sponsorship by every company, and of the cost of participation per healthcare professional in national and international conferences, serves the principles of transparency, credibility, social accountability and professional conduct.

However, in order to effectively confront existing problems and most important, to regenerate the health system, it is required to establish a fair, honest and mutually binding social agreement among all members of the health community: the State, doctors and pharmacists, nursing personnel, pharmaceutical companies, and all insured citizens.

As Minister of Health, I propose this new agreement as an active demonstration of patriotic solidarity and public duty contribution by all of us to overcome the crisis. I am determined from the beginning of the new year, to work hard in order to ensure that everybody is committed to this agreement.

### **Georgette Lalis, Head of Athens Office of Task Force for Greece**

Ethics are important in the medicines' sector. Non-acceptable practices and neglect of ethics harm the society as a whole. It has a major impact on public finances and causes a growing disrespect for the public interest.

The European Union has taken two initiatives. The task force has invested time and efforts, with the support of the Greek Authorities in combating corruption. An action plan has been developed, which has been agreed upon with the Greek Authorities and the Minister of the State "runs" its implementation.

The implementation of an integrated national strategy is planned and a national coordinator will co-ordinate its implementation.

The development of strategies in tax administration and Health is a prerequisite for the sector.

There is an extensive debate in the European Union on issues of transparency, which involves all stakeholders in health. It is necessary to develop an integrated vision at a European level.

The program "Process for corporate responsibility in the area of the Pharmaceutical Industry" started in 2010. It concerns not only the industry, but all parties involved. I'm glad that SFEE is the first body that took this initiative. Severity and perseverance are required. Times have changed and the behavior of the industry must be in line with the latest developments.

### **Ioannis Tountas, President of EOF**

The Code is an important factor in addressing many distortions that characterise the field of medicines.

One of those distortions is the fact that in 2010 we had more than 2,000 applications for sponsored scientific events.

In the last two years, important steps have been taken. In 2011 there were 1,088 requests for conferences and in 2012, there are 700. For conferences held abroad, only two licenses were given, for Cyprus and Istanbul, for national reasons, while budgets were reduced by 40%.

EOF proposes a certificate of attendance to be granted, only if the conference is attended by a certain percentage of doctors, and also proposes to encourage companies to attend conferences online.

Two years ago, EOF's Administration issued a special circular and established a scientific committee for approvals, aiming at rationalising sponsored scientific events. Scientific events by Greek scientific institutions to be held abroad, are no longer authorised, with the exception of those held in Cyprus and Istanbul, for national reasons.

In the said circular, EOF added new regulations that placed limits on sponsored participation of health professionals in scientific events in Greece and abroad, as well as limits to the amount of sponsorship and general marketing expenses of each company. A particularly important measure is the certification and monitoring of presence in the conference of each participant-physician through electronic recording, since a physician should attend over 60% of the conference hours in order to receive a certificate of participation.

Finally, the new circular, promotes sponsoring for physicians to attend scientific events through the Internet and incorporates in the costs of promotion, the free provision of specialised tests not covered by social security in critical patient groups such as AIDS, molecular testing for Fibrocystic disease, genotype HCV, HBV-DNA, genotype HBV, HTLV-I/II PCR, osteoporosis etc.

### **Leandros Rakintzis, Director General of Public Administration**

The Code is a useful tool for corruption combating, mainly through participation in conferences, in the public and private health sector, which is often a result of shady actions leading to over-prescribing.

If the Code is strictly observed, it will yield results, because the tourist conferences will end.

In any healthcare system, the doctor is at the heart of it, and is the one who may order a plethora of useless tests and prescribe medicines, which do not always help the patient. The new Code moves to the right direction. We are looking forward to working with SFEE's Code of Ethics Committee.

The audit of medical companies is not under my jurisdiction. There should be legislation, so that the ELKE and ELKEA accounts would be under tax audit.

### **Kostas Bakouris, Professor, President of the Organisation "Transparency International Hellas"**

Research by Transparency International shows that one-third of corruption incidents occur in the Health sector.

The global cost on health is estimated at \$3 trillion. It is however difficult to determine the cost of corruption.

An increase of 1% in corruption reduces GDP by 2%. It leads to serious humanitarian and social costs.

The medicines promotional practices have come under the spotlight in recent years. We welcome this development with the introduction of the Code and wish for other institutions to follow and strengthen the anti-corruption front.

### **Michalis Vlastarakos, President of PIS**

Physicians are not solely responsible for this issue. At fault are also bad policies, administrations, all social partners and doctors.

It is a key moment for Greek society, which seeks a foothold to strengthen its values and transparency.

We are aware, as a medical sector, of the situation and our responsibilities, so we want to contribute to the new social and economic reality. The message for more transparency is important and its recipients should embrace it.

The establishment of rules and regulations for pharmaceutical enterprises, promotes transparency and clears 'gray areas'. It relieves us from reckless criticism and promotes clarity in the relationship between the pharmaceutical and medical communities.

**Eleftherios Papageorgopoulos, Director of EOPYY**

Health management should have a social reference point and be continuously evaluated as to its effectiveness. By limiting the variance of randomness, which does not happen by accident, we cut costs.

The Central Prescriptions Processing Unit (KMES) has identified physicians with high rates of prescriptions of medicines manufacture by specific companies. Cases are investigated and all competent authorities have been mobilised. There are complaints about non-interventional studies, involving promoting medicines. This involved an agreement between the doctor and the company, to promote the prescription of a specific medicine. There are cases of patients were administered medicines not compatible with their illness.

The Code provides significant benefits, such as the education of health professionals, concerning their participation in conferences.

EOPYY collaborates with pharmaceutical enterprises for free transportation of medicines in units of the Organisation in the provinces.

EOPYY has expectations from the new Code: Assistance for eliminating of 'steered' prescriptions and maintaining the high level of education of health professionals. We would like to see the Code be implemented by companies which are not members of SFEE.

**Vassilis Kontozamanis, director of 1st YPE Attica**

The Code should not be limited but should be expanded. The issue is not only travel. The Code should be a vehicle for the State and companies, for patents access to quality healthcare.

It will regulate honoraria and scientific advice fees. The framework of clinical studies in Greece can give a development boost in the healthcare system and act as a measure for raising the income of health professionals.

**Giorgos Patoulis, president of ISA**

It is not just the doctors' fault, but also of those who 'produce' doctors without any limits, and do not look at what is happening in Europe.

On this important day, the Ministry of Health should have been here. The State is responsible for over-exposure of medicines. From a whole system, is it the doctor who works for Euro 1,000 the only one to blame?