VITAMIN D NUTRITIONAL POLICY IN EUROPE
The Need for Prevention, Education & Consumer Choice

CALL FOR ACTION

« If we prevent Vitamin D deficiency and with it possibly diseases, we will actually prevent healthcare costs and reduce the economic burden on our public health systems. » MEP Áder

On 23 March 2010, the Standing Committee of European Doctors (CPME), the Vitamin D Workshop and PA International Foundation jointly organised a conference in the European Parliament in Brussels. This conference provided a unique opportunity for stakeholders to bring the issue of widespread Vitamin D deficiency to the fore, at European level.

The event which took place under the patronage of János Áder, MEP (EPP), brought together a distinguished panel of experts, doctors, politicians, and patients’ representatives.

The keynote speakers set the scene, identified the causes of the increased prevalence of Vitamin D deficiency affecting at least 50% of the population, highlighted the strong evidence on its impact on bone and muscle health, and the ever growing data linking it with a wide range of other conditions such as cardiovascular diseases, cancer (e.g. colorectal, breast, prostate), diabetes, infectious diseases and multiple sclerosis.

« We all learned a lot today - now we have some homework to do. We should all ‘spread the word’ and educate people about Vitamin D » MEP Dr Weisgerber

Extra Vitamin D intake emerged as the evident, cheap, easy and safe solution to such a widespread problem, especially for the most vulnerable groups such as the elderly, young children and pregnant women. As sun exposure may contribute to skin cancer and Vitamin D intake merely via diet is usually not sufficient, supplements and/or fortified food were identified as the only viable options – at least for people at risk.

All parties involved agreed on a strong call for action towards policy-makers to bring the topic higher on the agenda and to strengthen prevention as the only sustainable way to decrease the burden of disease and of its related suffering. The MEPs present heard the call and committed to make the best use of the European Parliament’s power in promoting this public health issue. MEP Dr Weisgerber in closing the conference invited participants back to the Parliament in 2011 to review progress.

« A good Vitamin D and calcium intake can reduce falls, hip and non-vertebral fractures by 20% » Prof. Bischoff-Ferrari

« The solution is in our hands ! » Dr Radziwill, President of CPME, welcomed that doctors, patients and politicians joined forces in this appeal.
Education and awareness-raising is key, not only among the population but also among healthcare professionals, in order to spread the knowledge and ultimately enable consumers' choice. Therefore, the media and all stakeholders have an important role to play in order to spread the message!

« Today's conference was one of the most important that I have had the pleasure of attending and the statistics given by the expert panel, together with the range of diseases caused by Vitamin D deficiency illustrate that there is a huge amount of work to be done in terms of bridging the public awareness of the importance of the nutritional value of Vitamin D. » MEP Higgins

The host organisations have committed themselves to supporting the interested policy-makers in both Brussels and the Member States in their important role in raising awareness and promoting Vitamin D deficiency as a public health priority.

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The CPME - Standing Committee of European Doctors represents the National Medical Associations of 27 countries in Europe and over 1.3 million European doctors. The CPME aims to promote the highest standards of medical training and medical practice in order to achieve the highest quality of health care for all patients in Europe. The CPME is also concerned with the promotion of public health and the relationship between patients and doctors. http://www.cpme.eu

CPME Policy paper on Vitamin D: CPME 2009/179 Final

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The Public Advice International Foundation (PA International) is a not-for-profit foundation. It regularly provides free advice and support when there is a clear case of need. It is the umbrella Foundation sponsored by four regional companies: PA Asia, PA Middle East, PA Europe and PA Russia. PA International is developing new approaches to trans-boundary and trans-cultural problems. http://www.pa-international.org

The Vitamin D Workshop, Inc. is a non-profit organisation dedicated to the conduct and support of scientific meetings related to vitamin D. There have been fourteen previous "Workshops on Vitamin D" over the interval 1973 through 2009. http://vitamind.ucr.edu/workshop.html