

# what patients really want

The International Alliance of Patients' Organizations (IAPO) recently released the results of a new survey on perceptions of healthcare among patients' organization members in 10 EU Member States, Canada and Nigeria demonstrate strongly shared views on the needs and concerns of members related to currently administered healthcare and signal a need for a shift to a more patient-centred approach. The findings were presented by IAPO at the international conference "Geneva Forum: Towards global access to health".

IAPO's Policy and External Affairs Director Jo Harkness who presented the survey results in Geneva said: "Patient-centred healthcare, whereby systems are specifically designed to address the needs and preferences of patients, may be the most cost-effective and appropriate way to improve health outcomes for patients around the world. Concerted actions to develop and implement measures that reflect this approach are crucial. IAPO calls for the support and collaboration of government, healthcare policy decision makers, industry and physicians' organisations to take a pro-active stance".

The study randomly polled 1200 members of patients' organisations in 12 countries. It identified three recurring themes in the findings across the different regions that illustrate shared concerns related to the accessibility of individualised treatment and healthcare information.

Timely access to the best medicines and information is one of the primary concerns of patients and

patients' organizations. 98% of respondents agree that "because timing is so important in the prevention of disease, access to the most effective medicines when you need them most is essential". The same percentage agrees on the need for greater access to accurate, relevant and comprehensive information to help patients and healthcare providers make informed decisions.



The findings also show that 95% of members of patients' organisations demand a right to participate as partners in making healthcare decisions which affect their lives. The same proportion of members agrees that patients have a fundamental right to patient-centred healthcare that respects their individual needs, preferences and values. They think that unbundling bureaucratic restrictions on physicians would allow for a stronger physician patient relationship and result in the best treatment for each individual. 89% of them argue that assuming a "one size fits all" attitude to medicines is wrong, since patients react differently to medications depending on many factors, including their health

status, age, and physical make up - doctors are trained to assess all these factors and make the best decision for each individual patient.

A third and increasingly important trend the study indicates is a strong belief in increasing the involvement of patients as partners in shaping healthcare policy decisions that affect their lives. Whether this occurs through direct involvement in government-led legislative procedures and consultations or through third parties such as patients' organisations, the vast majority support the engagement of patients in healthcare policy decision-making to ensure that policies reflect patient and caregiver needs. In fact, 95% of members believe that governments should more actively take into account the views of doctor and patient organisations - including 62% who firmly stand on this position.

"What these findings demonstrate is the pressing need to align local healthcare systems better with patient needs and expectations to the benefit of both, leading to the most cost-effective disease prevention and care for each unique person," concluded Jo Harkness.

## About the study:

A summary of the study on perceptions of healthcare among patient organizations is available on the IAPO website ([www.patientsorganizations.org](http://www.patientsorganizations.org)).

The study was undertaken by Consensus Research Group ([www.consensus-research.com](http://www.consensus-research.com)) in April and May 2006 among 1200 members of patients' organizations in 12 countries and supported by Pfizer.

Study participants; UK, Germany, France, Hungary, Austria, Czech Republic, Italy, Spain, Belgium, Sweden, Canada, Nigeria

