Priorities for health systems strengthening: people centredness and public health service delivery through hospitals and health services

Written statement for WHO Europe RC65, agenda item 5C.
The International HPH Network / Clinical Health Promotion Centre (WHO-CC)

The Clinical Health Promotion Centre (WHO-CC) and the International Network of Health Promoting Hospitals & Health Services (HPH Network) work closely in line with Health 2020 and the European Action Plan for Strengthening Public Health Capacities and Services. The aim is to increase healthcare-based delivery of public health services to improve health of patients and communities. Your office can get in touch with HPH to help hospitals in your country deliver even more public health.

What can hospitals do on short term?
Like governments, hospitals have a key role and potential to increase delivery of public health services with tangible effect. There is ample scientific evidence that healthcare-based public health services can have impressive benefits – right here and now. To highlight a few of these, it is for instance widely accepted that public health service delivery in hospitals can very quickly help:

- Surgical patients: by significantly reducing their complication rates and days in bed
- Psychiatric patients: by significantly reducing their depression, anxiety, stress etc.
- Medical Patients: by significantly improving their disease control
- Hospitals: by lowering costs and increasing patient safety

What can hospitals do on long term?
It is an established fact that Europe’s burden of disease is related to smoking, alcohol, overweight, malnutrition and physical inactivity. Healthcare-based public health service delivery can help reduce this burden of disease and improve public health on long-term. Hospitals can also help build the much needed capacity and momentum for such changes in general, through being a major contact-point for citizens in need of help and a training-hub for all types of healthcare staff.

How can member countries support their hospitals to do this?
Hospitals and health services cure disease. If we support them, they can also promote health and prevent disease. And they have more than ample will and interest – much of it organized in the international HPH Network, which reaches around 800 hospitals and 1 million hospital staff in 43 countries worldwide (many of which in Europe). The focus of HPH is embedding public health service delivery in healthcare, and by supporting hospitals in member countries to implement HPH, their efforts in this field can be scaled up, and in turn, significantly benefit patients and society.

Contact HPH to find out how your office can help hospitals do even more in your country: info@hphnet.org.

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1 The WHO initiated HPH in the 90’ies. Today HPH is an NGO with 800+ member hospitals and health services globally. The International HPH Secretariat is placed in the Clinical Health Promotion Centre (WHO CC) – a Scandinavian research centre and knowledge-hub of the field in terms of evidence, education and implementation.
3 e.g. Taylor et al BMJ 2014
4 e.g. Gade et al NEJM 2008, Anderson et al Cochrane SysRev 2014
5 Pedersen et al, Clin Health Promot 2014.
6 e.g. Li et al Lancet 2008