

When the cooperation between patients  
and professionals' organizations makes a  
difference in policy making

National experience 2: Bulgaria

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***Unity makes strength!***



# General information

- Highest efficiency and best results for the patients can be achieved by the joint actions of healthcare professionals and patients' organizations
- Patients, patients' and professionals' organizations, all united around patients' health are only half of the equation. Before them stands the government and its regulatory bodies.

# Collaboration between NGO's and the Bulgarian Medical Association - 2010

- 2010 – the country trembles under the global economic crisis
  - Healthcare budget is shrinking
  - Hospitals fall in high debt
  - Grave financial distress in Bulgaria
  - Delay of payments to and from the hospitals

These lead to termination of scheduled patient reception

# Collaboration between NGO's and the Bulgarian Medical Association - 2010

The preliminary healthcare budget for 2011 determined by the government is low

This threatens the function of the healthcare system in Bulgaria

Only urgent cases are received

This threatens patients' health and generates tension in patients and professionals.



# Collaboration between NGO's and the Bulgarian Medical Association

Joint actions between patients' organizations, Bulgarian Medical Association, Bulgarian Dental Association, Bulgarian Association of Health Professionals in Nursing

A non-formal Public Council on Health Care is established

The Public Council declared willingness to strike across the country, which includes doctors, hospitals and pharmacies

They declare willingness to terminate work and strike

The emergency cases during the strike would be served

# Collaboration between NGO's and the Bulgarian Medical Association

These give joint pressure on the government

The government undertakes precautions and starts negotiations with the Public Council

Meetings for discussion of the problems and the possible solutions are appointed

After a few meetings a consensus is established and the strike readiness is suspended

# Results

The healthcare budget is enlarged.

Schedules for 2011 payments of hospital debts.

The National Health Insurance Fund's (NHIF) budget for 2011 is guaranteed.

In 2011 the healthcare system in Bulgaria functions **successfully**.

A little **budget surplus in NHIF** is expected by the end of the year.



# The impact of the collaboration with patients' organization

- Dr. Dimirar Lencov  
General Secretary, Bulgarian Medical Association

# Patients' organizations and the Bulgarian Pharmaceutical Union

May 2011

Definition of the problem:

*a legislation change permits **one owner** to owe **many pharmacies** is planned*

This violates the ethical model of regulated property of pharmacies

Pharmacists appeal to patients' organizations for assistance and support

Joint actions are taken

Result – the planned legislation changes aren't adopted

# The impact of the collaboration with patients' organization

- Mr. Todor Naydenov  
General Secretary, Bulgarian Pharmaceutical Union

# Collaboration between patients' organizations and gastroenterologists

- Numerous information campaigns on hepatitis have been realized in collaboration with gastroenterologists since 2005
- Awareness campaigns with the participation of leading gastroenterologists:
  - Free testing for hepatitis B and C in Bulgaria's largest cities
  - Free consultations for patients with Hepatitis B and C as part of the information activities

# Collaboration between patients' organizations and gastroenterologists

- All activities have the support of patients and medical professionals
- **Results:**
  - Due to the joint efforts of patients, patients' organizations and professionals, the hepatitis treatment in Bulgaria is relevant to most modern practices worldwide



# The impact of the collaboration with patients' organization

- Mrs. Milka Vassileva  
President, Bulgarian Association of Health  
Professionals in Nursing

# Challenges

***‘Self-discovery comes when a man measures himself against an obstacle’***

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry