

## **European Good Practice Guide for publicity relating to physicians' professional practice on the Net**

*Text adopted by International Conference of the Orders (CIO) - December 10th 2001*

NOTING the directive 2000/31/EC on certain legal aspects of information society services, in particular electronic commerce, in the Internal Market (Directive on electronic commerce) - whereby regulated professions are encouraged in the article 8 to draw up a Good Practice Guide at Community level for the marketing of professional services,

RECONFIRMING that the practice of medicine is neither trade nor commerce<sup>1</sup>,

RECOGNISING that the aim of regulating the marketing of medical services within a Good Practice Guide is to safeguard appropriate information for the public in order to promote patient safety,

RECOGNISING that this professional Good Practice Guide is applicable to all marketing of professional medical services to the public on-line, whether in the form of individual practitioners' own websites or by the use of other display models, -

EMPHASISING the fundamental requirements that all marketing of medical services must be accurate as to its content, appropriate in its form and in accordance with national regulation concerned,

EMPHASISING that physicians whose services are marketed must be clearly identifiable for accountability reasons,

RECOGNISING that information on medical equipment and medical methods used may only be included if this information has an obvious added value for the public, since good medical practice is not primarily based on medical technology but on the skills of the health care providers,

RECOGNISING that any mentioning of a practitioner's therapeutic results is inadmissible unless it appears within a context of a recognized quality assurance procedure

CONSIDERING that only approved titles such as registration and specialist qualification(s) may be used.

EMPHASISING that the fact that a provider has special areas of interest/competence must never lead to the use of unofficial titles and that such special areas can only be mentioned if they are not an integral part of the medical speciality concerned

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<sup>1</sup> Endorsed by the Conférence des Ordres June 6 th 1994

NOTING that collegial conduct also includes respect of one's colleagues and their work when giving information on professional services on-line and that comparative information - open or covert - is therefore inappropriate,

RECOGNISING that medical products may be available for sale at the surgery in a nonobtrusive manner, but only if the product is in line with the medical field of the surgery and if permitted by national regulations,

EMPHASISING that physicians must not participate in marketing drugs or other health care related products to the public,

RECALLING that health information displayed by the doctor must be scientifically proven,

URGING that this European Good Practice Guide be incorporated in the appropriate national regulation and implemented and monitored accordingly,

The members of the "Conférence Internationale des ordres et des organismes d'attributions similaires" are therefore encouraged to introduce a national Good Practice Guide to this end.

## USEFUL RECOMMENDATIONS

The member delegations of the CIO are encouraged to draw up national guidelines in accordance with the principles set out in the above text of the Good Practise Guide. Such guidelines should address at minimum the following issues and adhere to the standards indicated:

### *Identity of the service provider*

The information displayed should include family name, forenames and details of the license issued by the professional association or by an organisation with similar authority.

### *Registration status with professional bodies*

The site must clearly state that the doctor is registered with the appropriate body and must also refer to the rules of professional conduct applicable to the Member State in which he/she is established (e.g. the national Code of Medical Ethics)

### *Diplomas and professional qualifications*

Only recognised diplomas and professional qualifications should be displayed on the site.

### *Access and on-call services*

The site should display the address, telephone and fax numbers, e-mail address and opening times at the doctor's surgery or surgeries, as well as any home visiting services. Arrangements for responding to emergencies and access to out-of-hours health care services (on-call doctors, local emergency services, referral to emergency help line) should also be displayed on the site.

### *Partners/Associates*

The doctor should give information on whether he/she practises jointly with other doctors and may also display their names.

### *Fees*

Information on whether the practitioner works within the social security/national health system or not must be displayed. Tariffs for various medical services should be presented.

### *Technology and medical equipment*

The site should display any information on the diagnostic and therapeutic procedures available at the surgery.