

# The Vienna Recommendations on Health Promoting Hospitals<sup>\*)</sup>

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## Introduction

The new developments in the health promoting hospital (HPH) project, the changes in health policy and the health care reforms in Europe created a need to review the framework in which the project is based. The shift from the HPH pilot project (based on the framework defined in the Budapest Declaration on Health Promoting Hospitals) to a broader network supported mainly by national and regional networks and the Ljubljana Charter on Reforming Health Care provide the background for the new phase of the HPH project. The Ljubljana Charter was issued in June 1996 with the approval of the health ministers, or their representatives, of the Member States of the WHO European Region. The Charter addresses health care reforms in the specific context of Europe and is centred on the principle that health care should first and foremost lead to better health and quality of life for people.

Hospitals play a central role in the health care system. As centres that practice modern medicine, conduct research and education, and accumulate knowledge and experience, they can influence professional practice in other institutions and social groups.

Hospitals are institutions through which a large number of people pass; they can reach a large sector of the population. In some countries, up to 20% of the population come into contact with hospitals as patients every year, with an even larger number of visitors. In some cities the hospital is the largest employer; 30 000 hospitals in Europe employ 3% of the total workforce.

Hospitals can be hazardous workplaces. Hazards to health include not only exposure to various toxic or infectious chemical or physical agents but also stress arising from pressures related to the nature of the work and responsibilities involved.

Hospitals are producers of large amount of waste. They can contribute to the reduction of environmental pollution and, as consumers of large amounts of products, they can favour healthy products and environmental safety.

Traditionally, hospitals have offered a wide range of diagnostic and therapeutic services, including medical and surgical interventions, in response to acute or chronic diseases. As a result, hospitals focus mainly on illness and curative care, not health. Today, hospitals show a growing concern for patients' lives before and after their hospital stays; they show an increasing awareness of their relationships to other parts of the health field and to the community as a whole. Although hospitals have been only marginally concerned with health promotion and disease prevention, they have an enormous potential in these fields. Realizing this potential could

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<sup>\*)</sup> The Vienna Recommendations were adopted at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Workshop of National/Regional Health Promoting Hospitals Network Coordinators, Vienna, 16 April 1997.

optimize their use of resources, directing them not only to curative care but to health in its broader sense.

The growing need and new possibilities for treatment and care on the one hand and tight public budgets on the other hand create a situation in which health care providers and hospitals in particular have to increase their efficiency in using their resources. At the same time, the development of medical and information technology opens innovative options for health care services. As a consequence, substantial changes in the hospital as an organization are on the way, as are shifts in hospitals' responsibilities within the health care sector. A clear orientation towards health gain should contribute to services that better meet the needs of clients and consumers and to the rational use of resources.

The Vienna recommendations take account of the needs of health care reforms and the need for hospitals to be more concerned with health. They are divided into *Fundamental Principles*, *Strategies for Implementation* and *Participation in the HPH Network*.

### **Fundamental principles**

Within the framework of the health for all strategy, the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion, the Ljubljana Charter for Reforming Health Care and the Budapest Declaration on Health Promoting Hospitals, a health promoting hospital should:

1. promote human dignity, equity and solidarity, and professional ethics, acknowledging differences in the needs, values and cultures of different population groups;
2. be oriented towards quality improvement, the wellbeing of patients, relatives and staff, protection of the environment and realization of the potential to become learning organizations;
3. focus on health with a holistic approach and not only on curative services;
4. be centred on people providing health services in the best way possible to patients and their relatives, to facilitate the healing process and contribute to the empowerment of patients;
5. use resources efficiently and cost-effectively, and allocate resources on the basis of contribution to health improvement; and
6. form as close links as possible with other levels of the health care system and the community.

### **Strategies for Implementation**

The HPH project provides opportunities throughout the hospital to develop health-oriented perspectives, objectives and structures. This means in particular:

1. fostering participation and creating commitment by:
  - encouraging participatory, health-gain-oriented procedures throughout the hospital, including the active involvement of all professional groups and building alliances with other professionals outside the hospital;

- encouraging an active and participatory role for patients according to their specific health potential, fostering patients' rights, improving patients' wellbeing and creating health promoting hospital environments for patients and relatives;
- creating healthy working conditions for all hospital staff, including the reduction of hospital hazards, as well as psychosocial risk factors;
- enhancing the commitment of hospital management to health gain, including the principles of health in the daily decision-making processes;

2. improving communication, information and education by:

- improving communication within and the culture of the hospital so that they contribute to the quality of life for hospital staff (communication styles used by hospital staff should encourage interprofessional cooperation and mutual acceptance);
- improving the communication between the hospital staff and the patients so that it is guided by respect and humane values;
- enhancing the provision and quality of information, communication and educational programmes and skill training for patients and their relatives;
- integrating the principles of the health promoting hospital into the hospital's routine through developing a common corporate identity within the hospital;
- improving the hospital's communication and cooperation with social and health services in the community, community-based health promotion initiatives and volunteer groups and organizations, and thus helping to optimize the links between different providers and actors in the health care sector;
- developing information systems that measure outcomes as well as serving administrative purposes;

3. using methods and techniques from organizational development and project management:

- to change and reorient existing hospital routines to make the hospital a learning organization;
- to train and educate personnel in areas relevant for health promotion, such as education, communication, psychosocial skills and management;
- to train project leaders in project management and communication skills;

4. learning from experience:

- exchange of experience with implementing health promoting hospitals projects at the national and international level should be promoted so that participating hospitals can learn from different approaches to problem solving;
- health promoting hospitals should commit themselves to regional, national and international exchange and communication.

### **Participation in the WHO Health Promoting Hospitals Network**

Hospitals that want to belong to the WHO Health Promoting Hospitals Network:

1. should endorse the fundamental principles and strategies for implementation of the Vienna Recommendations;
2. should belong to the national/regional network in the countries where such a networks exist (hospitals in countries without such networks should apply directly to the international coordinating institution);
3. should comply with the rules and regulations established at the international and national/regional levels by the members of the international network, the World Health Organization and the international coordinating institution.

### **There will be three types of membership:**

- members of the national/regional networks
- individual members from countries where no national/regional network exists
- members of thematic networks.