

Towards a national medicines information network

Finland's national medicines information strategy was launched in February 2012. The key objectives for the strategy are to establish a multidisciplinary medicines information network and to create a coordinating function. The process of creating the medicines information network is now underway.

In February 2012, the Finnish Medicines Agency (Fimea) launched a national medicines information strategy, drawn up in consultation with stakeholder bodies. The strategy document outlines a new medicines information network, which is currently being established.

The network will comprise five working groups as well as a communications team. These are tasked with improving medicines information provision within their own fields of expertise. The first working groups will serve for a period of two years. It is envisaged that by the end of this term, each working group will have had the opportunity to start their work and prioritise the activities allocated to them in the medicines information strategy (Fimea 2012).

It is also intended that the working groups will have made progress on new development initiatives, with funding secured for all relevant projects. The network's research function will kick off with a project to identify the medicines information requirements of patients and healthcare professionals across the sector and is expected to commence immediately. Opportunities for international cooperation should also be pursued from the beginning.

Medicines information coordinating group first meeting in September

The medicines information coordination group has been established by Fimea. It is tasked with promoting and coordinating the development of medicines information in Finland. The group will also issue its own recommendations on the prioritisation of the development projects proposed in the original strategy document. The group will also monitor and provide comment on the projects, coordinate all relevant research activity and promote international cooperation (Fimea 2012).

A particularly important task for the coordination group is to spearhead the way in which content is produced and the information is organised. The aim is to generate medicines information aimed primarily at healthcare professionals but also at patients, and to foster cooperation between the public and private sectors. Table 1 lists the bodies represented in the coordination group.

At its first meeting in September, the coordination group put forward a draft list of proposed members for the remaining working groups as well as a proposal for how the activities contained in the medicines information strategy document should be allocated between the groups. The consultation period for these proposals concluded in October. The coordination group will review the submissions before calling the other working groups to a meeting. In practice, it is envisaged that this will take place in late December or early January.

Table 1. Medicines information coordination group representatives.*

Fimea (Chair and Secretary)
Pharma Industry Finland (PIF)
Pharmaceutical Information Centre
Association of Finnish Pharmacies
The Finnish Medical Society Duodecim
Yliopiston Apteekki (University Pharmacy)
SOSTE Finnish Society for Social and Health, Pulmonary Association Heli (patient representatives)
Union of Health and Social Care Professionals (Tehy) and the Finnish Nurses Association (nursing representatives)

* The coordination working group will also create four further working groups, which will appoint their representative for the coordination group.

A clear role for each working group

The medicines information network comprises an education working group, research working group, medicines information development working group for healthcare professionals and a medicines information development working group for patients (table 2).

Communications experts will be invited to form a communications team that, overseen by the coordination group, will be responsible for preparing and implementing a communications strategy for the network.

Education working group

- A forum for teachers at vocational institutions, polytechnics, universities and complementary education units tasked with promoting a multidisciplinary approach and medicines information activities in both basic and complementary training.
- The needs of working life will be taken into account in the group's activities.
- A key objective is to implement multidisciplinary joint

working practices in collaboration with the medicines information development working group for healthcare professionals.

Research working group

- Tasked with promoting collaboration and research activities relevant to medicines information. The research working group will also determine the most important research areas and topics related to medicines information.
- Impartial; all members to declare any competing interests.
- Works closely with the coordination working group.
- Critically evaluates the activities of the medicines information network and, where possible, critiques all output with regard to user-friendliness, reliability and impartiality.

Medicines information development working group for healthcare professionals

- Tasked with developing medicines information-related activities and promoting multidisciplinary joint working and the dissemination of medicines information throughout the healthcare sector.
- A key objective is implementing multidisciplinary joint working in clinical and other practical settings in collaboration with the education working group.

Medicines information development working group for patients

- Tasked with developing and generating medicines information content and medicines information-related events and other activities aimed at patients.
- All work designed to foster self-management and patient empowerment.

Public and transparent

All working group meeting memoranda, action and project plans and all other materials will be freely available to interested parties. A shared online platform to facilitate two-way communications is being considered.

Forthcoming Medicines information – the users and producers discussion events are an additional opportunity to find out more about the network's activities and to provide feedback. Initially, these events are expected to be organised on a yearly basis.

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GOOD TO KNOW

The medicines information strategy can be downloaded in a pdf format at Fimea's website. On the same page, you will find an order form which you can use for ordering a printed copy of the strategy.

LITERATURE

Finnish Medicines Agency (Fimea). Rational use of medicines through information and guidance. Medicines Information Services: Current State and the Strategy for 2020. Serial Publication Fimea Develops, Assesses and Informs 1/2012, Helsinki 2012.