The End of the Beginning

Dear friends and colleagues,

2017 has come to a close, and as I look back in reflection, I cannot but once again be impressed by the far-reaching effects of events that have occurred in the pharmaceutical world - effects that have not only had an immediate impact but that are likely to command our attention for quite some time to come. We have seen the first medicine approved with a digital ingestion tracking system, the first gene therapy medicines approved against cancer and against inherited disease. The excitement that these scientific advances represent is tempered by sombre contemplation of the long-overdue changes in how healthcare systems and health technology assessment are dealing with the challenging questions surrounding availability and accessibility of these novel medicinal products.

In this same year, one must mention two topics particular to the pharmaceutical industry in Europe. The first is the set of impending milestones in the implementation of the Delegated Regulation for the safety features appearing on the packaging of medicinal products for human use. It might seem that there is time to spare, with the deadline more than a year away, but some targets are much closer, not the least of which the six-month full-scale testing period recommended in every country - which effectively means that regulatory notifications and variations need to be submitted, serialised products ready within the supply chain, repositories functional, and all stakeholders on board by August of this year. The second topic is, of course, Brexit. Already we have seen the impact in the decision for the relocation of the European Medicines Agency, and the effect that this will have on the operations of the Agency and its role in healthcare throughout Europe. Yet this is but a drop in the ocean compared to the changes that the pharmaceutical industry and the professionals within it will need to implement to be prepared for Brexit, even with the transitional period that the industry is calling for. So much is at stake, and above all, the continued supply of medicines to patients who need them, with the peace of mind that professionals within the industry have worked to the best of their abilities to ensure their quality, safety and efficacy.

Yes, we are about to see considerable changes in the pharmaceutical world, and we must be prepared for them. Change is inevitable, and it comes even to EIPG, or more specifically, to EIPG's involvement in european Industrial Pharmacy. After more than nine years of collaboration with Euromed, and to whom I extend my thanks for their commitment and hard work over all these years, the General Assembly has decided to explore alternative paths for the future of EIPG's publication portfolio, and we look to the future with courage, for, in the words of the Bard, "Would I wear so fair on my journey! The first stretch is the worst, methinks."

I wish you all a serene and fruitful 2018.

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President, EIPG