

The journey and the goal

An oft-cited oriental story describes a student who asked his teacher, "How long will it take me to master your discipline?" The teacher replied, "Ten years." The student said, "If I work twice as hard, how long will it take then?" "Twenty years." answered the teacher. Again the student said, "But if I work really hard, night and day, how long will it take me?" The teacher responded, "Thirty years." The student was confused, "How is it that if I work harder, you say that it will take longer?" The teacher replied, "Because when you keep one eye on the goal, you only have one eye with which to find the way."

The moral of the story, namely, that the journey is more important than the destination, is perhaps difficult to apply in the pharmaceutical industry. How else, if not by keeping in mind that the goal of maintaining the highest standards of good practices is to guarantee patient safety, does one find the courage and justification to face the consequences of suspending the marketing authorisations of hundreds of medicinal products due to flawed studies? As I pen this message, the first draft of the Delegated Regulation laying down detailed rules for the safety features appearing on the outer packaging of medicinal products for human use has just been made public. It is a regulation that will require a challenging journey to put into practice, and how else, if not by keeping in mind the goal of protecting patients from the dangers of falsified medicinal products, does one convince all players to embark,



without delay, on the steps needed to implement the requirements of this important regulation within the established timeframes?

Similarly, consider the panic of Greek patients unable to purchase their medicines at the height of the economic crisis but a few weeks ago, or the frustration of French patients, hearing once more "*Désolé mais votre médicament est indiqué manquant*", due to drug shortages that, according to the Agence Nationale de Sécurité du Médicament et des Produits de Santé, have risen by ten times in the

last 6 years. How else, if not than by keeping our eye on the goal of solving this perennial challenge in the provision of healthcare, can one continue to bring together all stakeholders at a European level, to go beyond the limited, albeit well-meaning, initiatives of the European Commission as outlined in its recent response to the European Parliament?

Yes, the goal is important. However, this does not in any way diminish neither the importance of the journey that needs to be undertaken, nor the challenges, trials and tribulations that all concerned experience in reaching that goal. Therefore, in the words of Lord Alfred Tennyson, "*Oh yet we trust that somehow good will be the final goal of ill*".

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Farrugia'.

Professor Claude Farrugia
Vice-President Communications, EIPG

We are sad to announce the death of Arthur Dewelde, industrial pharmacist, technical director Pfizer Jette and Lieutenant-Colonel in the pharmacy reserve of Belgium. Through his professional drive, he shaped the aims, objectives and culture of the European Industrial Pharmacists' Group. Following years of representations to the Commission alongside other healthcare professions, he ensured that pharmacy had its own professional directive appropriate to the industrial pharmacists as well as other areas of pharmacy of that period. We wish to extend our condolences to his friends and family.