21 mars 2013

Lunch Debate European Parliament – HCWH Europe
"Towards a non-toxic European healthcare"

Speech Sami Frank Rifaï, C2DS

My name is Sami Frank Rifaï. I'm the Managing Director of the Hôpital Privé de l'Essonne near Paris and the treasurer of the C2DS, Committee for Sustainable Development in Healthcare. The C2DS is a very pragmatic and realistic association of 340 hospital members in France. For the last seven years, the aim of the C2DS has been to raise awareness among key players in the healthcare sector and to promote the advantages of better practices in order to manage the environmental, human and economic impacts of healthcare activities. We systematically work in consultation with all the healthcare stakeholders, (hospital federations, organizations representing the medical profession, patients organizations, central purchasing bodies, industrials, ministries and public agencies.) We have noticed over the years a growing demand among our hospital members for phthalates free medical devices, which means devices which are safer for patients and manipulators. Some healthcare establishments even voluntarily decided to favor "greener" medical devices. I will come back to this point afterwards, but let me now speak about the French legislation as regard to medical devices.

Early at the C2DS we recognised the necessity to have a clear legislation in terms of phthalates. In 2010, Valérie Boyer, a French deputy with whom the C2DS closely worked made a legislative proposal aiming at restricting the exposure of vulnerable people to phthalates in healthcare establishments. Unfortunately this proposal did not lead to a law.

On 13th December 2012, France was given an overwhelming support from other european countries after voting a law requiring DEHP phthalates in tubulures to be baned in paediatric, neonatology and maternity wards by 1st July 2015. The main vote of this law was on BPA though.

The C2DS has been very pleased that this decision came from France as - alongside with other associations – it has since 2006 activily alerted health professionals, patient associations, ministries, public agencies, industrials, etc.

As we have seen with the debate of BPA in baby bottles, France had been a pioneer with a law voted on the 30th june 2010, which prohibited the manufacture and reselling of baby bottles with BPA. A year later, the European Commission adopted the ban of BPA in baby bottles (March 2011).

As regard to the ban of BPA in children food contact materials, one country (Denmark) had given the impulse in 2010 and many other countries followed right afterwards.

So we can observe a kind of domino effect.

We hope first that this decision to ban DEHP phthalates in tubulures from peadiatric wards is going to set a trend - but much more we would encourage the parliamentarians to be from now on even bolder and extend the ban to other phtalates and other medical devices.

I would like to quote Senator Gilbert Barbier, a French surgeon, specialist of endocrine disruptors. He wrote a draft in 2010 to ban BPA from plastics containing food at a time where we had fewer tangible evidence than

today about the danger of this substance on human beings. His work contributed to the the ban of BPA in baby bottles in 2010 and indirectly - with the December law - to the ban of BPA in all material containing food by 2015.

He has also been the rapporteur of a significant report on Endocrine Disruptors in 2011 ordered by the French parliamentary Office for Evaluation of Scientific and Technological Options and called "*Endocrine Disruptors, time to adopt precautionary measures*" (Perturbateurs endocriniens, le temps de la précaution). He said : "*having a doubt about the inoquity of a substance is enough reason to* act ".

As regard to the law voted in December 2012, he had suggested an amendment to phase out not 1 but 3 phthalates classified as CMR (carcinogenic, mutagenic, or toxic for reproduction) : DEHP, DBP, *BBP (di (2-éthylhexyl) phtalate (DEHP) ; dibutyl phtalate (DBP) ; butyl benzyl phtalate (BBP)* in tubulures but also in containers like blood bags, in paediatric, neonatology and maternity wards. He also pointed out the importance to work with the industry in order to make sure that the substitutes are adapted and not worse than the material substituded - for the sake of precaution.

Senator Barbier also insists on the fact that, in order to be efficient, the decisions taken at a French level must find broader resonance at an european level. That was the conclusion of his speech at the French Assembly in december 2012, and it is today addressed to you all.

As an Hospital Director, we cannot ignore that many substances and medical devices used in our establishments are harmful. At the C2DS we try to educate Healthcare professionals to adopt better practices and I would like to give you a few examples as regard to phthalates in hospital.

In the maternity ward I am managing, we have launched a program to phase out as many CMR products as possible. Some other C2DS members are doing the same. The Clementville maternity ward in the south of France, which deals with high risk pregnancies, only uses phthalates free medical devices since 2010. The estimated over cost is of 5% only. Some dialysis centres have succeded to use mostly phthalates free dialysis tubing lines because dialysis patients are exposed three times a week during 4 hours. We have also a lot of initiatives around green procurement, where producers have to prove that their products are phthalates free to be favoured.

Many examples show that it is possible to use, also partly, EDC free medical devices. Such actions are only possible when the impulse is coming from the upper management and where the teams are convinced and engaged. Unfortunately, such experiences remain rare. That is why healthcare professionals need stronger legislation in this respect, ideally at the european level. In some cases Research and Development are required to find replacement products (Blood bags for instance). Moreover, medical devices without EDCs must be produced on a large scale so that their prices remain low. This economical aspect is very important in a time of economical crisis. At the C2DS we share the philosophy "First, do no harm, then cure", whereas the means and devices we use to cure today's illnesses must not create tomorrow's illnesses. Therefore, healthcare professionals and european NGOs need you to have a long term legislation in the field of medical devices without Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals (EDCs). Thank you for your attention !