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European citizens highly value the pharmacist as a key advisor on health and self medication products

The Pharmaceutical Group of the European Union (PGEU) welcomes the results of the AESGP¹ commissioned study undertaken by IPSOS Health on people's attitudes to self-medication products purchased at pharmacies.

The study shows that *European citizens value the pharmacist as a key advisor on health and self-medication products*. Pharmacists and doctors are the main source of information on these products and the preferred choice of advice for citizens when buying non-prescription medicines. The survey highlighted the desire of citizens to receive more information from the pharmacist on self-medication products, in particular with regard to cheaper alternatives and new medicines.

The study also showed the *high level of satisfaction among citizens for the advice received from the pharmacist*. Nearly all the people who explained their health problems to their pharmacist found the advice they received useful. A total of 89% declared it as "very" or "quite" useful. This is a clear recognition of the quality of the information and the high level of service received in the pharmacy.

High satisfaction and loyalty to the profession is also confirmed by the answers obtained to questions addressing self-selection of non prescription (self-medication) medicines in the pharmacy. The majority of people who answered the question opposed self-selection specifically stating that its main disadvantage was the *loss of the pharmacist's endorsement* when buying medicines. Worries about side effects, and anxiety linked to not receiving enough information on a product, were also quoted as reasons for opposing self-selection.

The PGEU welcomes the results of this study, which is supported by other surveys² recently carried out at national and at European level, showing the high appreciation of citizens towards pharmacists.

European pharmacists commit themselves to a more proactive and visible role

Encouraged by these results and animated by the final objective to respond to citizens needs, the PGEU delegates, meeting in London for their Annual General Assembly, agreed on *the importance of the pharmacist being more visible and more proactive as a Public Health agent*. During the interactive session of this meeting entitled "The Pharmacy of the Future", time was devoted to exploring new challenges and new opportunities for Community Pharmacists in a changing healthcare environment. The General Assembly agreed to prepare a manifesto that will set the guiding principles of the profession for the future.

An extensive report of the meeting held in London on June 10 and 11 will be shortly available on the PGEU website www.pgeu.org

¹ The European Association of the Self-Medication Industry (Association Européenne des Spécialités Pharmaceutiques Grand Public)

² EURISKO survey in Italy February 2002; Reader's Digest 2001 European Trusted Brands survey, UK Consumer's Association survey "What Consumers Want from the NHS"