

Self-care includes actions and measures individuals take to improve their health and well-being, to prevent and decrease the likelihood of disease and to restore health after illness or injury. It is the first step and first choice for European citizens who are taking an increasingly active role in their healthcare.

Demographic changes and national budgetary constraints increase the pressure on healthcare systems and are now creating an ever increasing need for the effective and efficient utilisation of resources in the provision of health services to the European citizens.

Pharmacies are often the first place citizens visit when faced with an ailment, and pharmacists are highly trained professionals who can effectively guide and counsel citizens seeking advice. The role of pharmacists is very important in the area of self-care. Pharmacists can advise citizens on product selection and ensure the safe and effective use of non-prescription medicines. The high level of professionalism shown by pharmacists in the exercise of their profession and their role in increasing the confidence and capacity of citizens to practise self-care demonstrate the significant contributions pharmacy practice delivers to public health.

The European self-care industry has consistently ensured that only products of proven efficacy, safety and high quality reach the European consumer. The high standards applied by the pharmaceutical industry in Europe fulfil and often exceed regulatory requirements. Industry ensures that existing standards on the provision of information to citizens and product advertising are met. However, industry also recognises the importance of citizens practising self-care and self-medication being educated and well informed about the conditions they treat and the products they use. It therefore aims to take all necessary measures to inform, educate and empower individuals in accordance with the legal and regulatory framework. In this context, close collaboration between industry and pharmacists, the front-line health professionals, is of vital importance.

Pharmacists and industry share a common goal: promoting public health and empowering individuals by providing high quality services and products. Working together can have a multiplying effect on the impact of their actions, to the benefit of European citizens and public health.

Acknowledging the value of self-care and self-medication and their potential contribution to the health of citizens and public health, the Association of the European Self-Medication Industry (AESGP) and the Pharmaceutical Group of the European Union (PGEU) commit to working together towards:

1. Increasing the capacity of citizens to self-care by:
 - Enhancing the role of pharmacists and developing pharmacies into health centres in the community.
 - Communicating information on self-care products to citizens in pharmacies in a clear and simple way, increasing awareness of available treatment options, and ensuring the safe and appropriate product use.
2. Facilitating communication between pharmacists and citizens seeking advice by:
 - Improving citizens' knowledge of self-care products.
 - Addressing how to support self-care practices in the education and training of pharmacists as well as through continuing professional development activities.
 - Ensuring that the layout of the pharmacy and the visibility and good presentation of non-prescription medicines increase the awareness of available products and stimulate the dialogue between pharmacists and citizens.
3. Supporting actions and promoting health policies directed at advancing self-care by:
 - Recognising the important role of pharmacists in pharmacovigilance and the safe use of medicines.
 - Supporting the expansion of self-care through innovation.
 - Engaging in a dialogue and communicating the benefits of responsible self-care to regulators and health policy decision makers.



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