



**A Position Paper  
prepared by  
the Patients' and Citizens Task Force  
of EHTEL  
in the context of the participation in the  
User & Citizens Open Group of Healthware**

Brussels, 25 September 2006

**Summary**

**eHealth and Patient Safety**

In ideal world, the patient would be in total control of the healthcare that he or she receives and take decisions regarding the way in which they are treated. In reality they can only do this with the support of professionals and with the provision of accurate and timely information. Given that we do not live in a perfect world and that professional time is both expensive and limited, patients increasingly rely on peer support groups to advise them.

It is against this background that EHTEL's Patient and Citizens Task Force was established. It is a unique group within the European eHealth community consisting of individuals who are patients in their own right or who represent patient groups but who are also highly qualified from a strategic, technical and managerial perspective within health and medical informatics. At the highest level, it has two main aims: to influence other stakeholders in the ICT and healthcare areas and to empower other patient groups.

Currently, most discussion about the development of eHealth systems happens between the developers and national institutions while there is very little interaction between those organisations and the patient. A key role for the Group is therefore to canvass patient opinion and to communicate these views to the stakeholders described above.

The Task Force has considered its position in relation to eHealth and Patient Safety. This can be summarised as:

“

- ▼ We endorse the general principles of the Luxembourg Declaration on Patient Safety although we believe that it does not refer to information systems in sufficient detail.
- ▼ All commercially marketed eHealth information systems should be subjected to rigorous and independent safety testing before being deployed for the management of patient care. This activity should be driven by the European Commission.
- ▼ All staff operating eHealth information systems should be properly trained in their use.



- ▼ We endorse the development of hardware, software and data standards as applied to healthcare information and believe that work should be undertaken by the European Commission to promote consistency across the Union.
- ▼ All organisation involved with healthcare information systems should implement incident reporting procedures in line with international standards. Further technology should be exploited to allow patients to contribute to these schemes and to receive appropriate training in their use.
- ▼ All eHealth information systems should have properly implemented and managed audit trails
- ▼ National health technical infrastructures should be exploited to promote warnings for patients and professionals alike.
- ▼ Marking and other schemes should be developed to indicate good quality information sites on the Internet and World Wide Web
- ▼ National health technical infrastructures should be exploited to help in the identification of bona fide healthcare professionals”

The entire position paper is available at  
<http://healthware.alcasat.net/publications/publications.html>

