

MEDIA BRIEFING

25th March 2008

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Leading think tanks team up to discuss key healthcare topic

London based think tank, the Stockholm Network is joining forces with the Centre for the New Europe (Belgium), the Istituto Bruno Leoni (Italy), the Institute for Free Enterprise (Germany) and the Centre for Medicine in the Public Interest (US) to discuss one of the most important and contentious global healthcare topics of the 21st Century: Health Technology Assessment (HTA).

HTA (the systematic use of cost-benefit-analyses of healthcare treatments) affects the daily lives of patients, determining whether we have access to effective and cutting edge healthcare treatments. However, up until now, there has been little broad-based and informed debate about the HTA process. Until this occurs, general misunderstanding and political abuse of the system looks likely to remain.

The international *HTA Taskforce* seeks to achieve the following:

- **Simplify and demystify** - enable a broader and more accessible discussion about HTA and a critical appraisal of HTA-related policies.
- **Place the discourse on HTA within a broader political and economic context** – we will examine whether HTA bodies like NICE are really politically independent, whether they are as transparent as they should be, and whether they consult with those who are most affected by their decisions, such as patients and physicians.
- **Provide comparative data and analysis of different HTA systems at the national level** - in Europe and beyond, including the U.S., Canada, Australia and New Zealand.
- **Increase public awareness** – by organising topical events, workshops and debates, involving the media, policy makers and the interested public.

The *HTA Taskforce* will be launched from the 10th – 12th March in Brussels, Rome and Berlin, with guest speaker and leading world expert, Prof. Frank Lichtenberg of Columbia University.

For more information about the adoption and use of HTA worldwide see Stockholm Network latest publications:

- *Health Technology Assessment in the UK and Germany*; a paper that examines the role and operation of HTA as a cost-containment measure in the UK and Germany: http://www.stockholm-network.org/downloads/publications/HTA3_2.pdf
- *Health Technology Assessment in Context*; a cross-national study of HTA that highlights that healthcare decisions are increasingly made with cost-containment in mind. This is particularly true in Europe where consumers face unacceptable restrictions in the choice of drugs and life-extending medical technologies available to them: http://www.stockholm-network.org/downloads/publications/Health_Technology_Assessment_in_Context.pdf

To find out more about the *HTA Taskforce*, please visit: <http://www.stockholm-network.org/conferences/events/upcoming.php>

-ENDS-

For further details, please contact Cara Walker, Head of Communications for the Stockholm Network on + 44 20 7354 8888 or via e-mail to: cara@stockholm-network.org

Notes to Editors:

The Stockholm Network is the leading pan-European think tank. It offers a unique network of 130 + market-oriented think tanks across Europe providing access to the best European policy thinking.

For further Information contact:

Dr Meir Pugatch, Director of Research

Stockholm Network

Tel: 00 972 50 559 2941

Fax: 020 7359 8888

meir@stockholm-network.org www.stockholm-network.org