



L A U T G E D A C H T

wegweiser zur umsetzung der patientenrechte

Do patients with asthma, type II diabetes and cardiovascular diseases feel sufficiently informed?

Dr. Georg Vana

The patient survey performed by Pfizer in the summer of 2004 shows the importance of improved information and education in the area of healthcare.

The survey indicates that European patients want more information on health issues, in order to be able to better manage their own condition. They are concerned that the lack of health information might be worsening their condition.

Patients who have been suffering from chronic diseases like asthma, diabetes or cardiovascular diseases for a long time can positively influence the course of their disease as well as their every day condition by changing their behaviour, e.g. by diet and exercise. The problem is that the change in lifestyle necessary for the treatment usually does not match the patients' long lasting habits, and therefore it is very hard or in many cases even impossible to implement this change. This is also due to the fact that patients do not recognize the correlation between medical treatment and changed lifestyle or that the information they receive is not understandable and therefore cannot be implemented.

The patients' knowledge about their state of health, the kind of medical treatment and the way they can contribute to an improvement of their condition by changing their lifestyle is decisive for a continuous successful treatment and prevention, and it is an important contribution to a cost-effective management.

A representative survey (The Pfizer Informed Patient Survey – June to September 2004) was therefore conducted to examine from which sources patients take information on their health state and how they deal with it. More than 4,500 patients from the USA and eight European countries (Finland, France,

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Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain, Sweden and United Kingdom) suffering from asthma, type II diabetes and heart diseases were interviewed.

Results of the survey:

The survey shows that nearly two thirds (62%) of the patients with chronic diseases proactively change their behaviour, if they continuously get sufficient information on their condition. In Europe 58% of the respondents indicated to have changed their behaviour based on continuous information. This percentage is significantly lower than in the USA (68%).

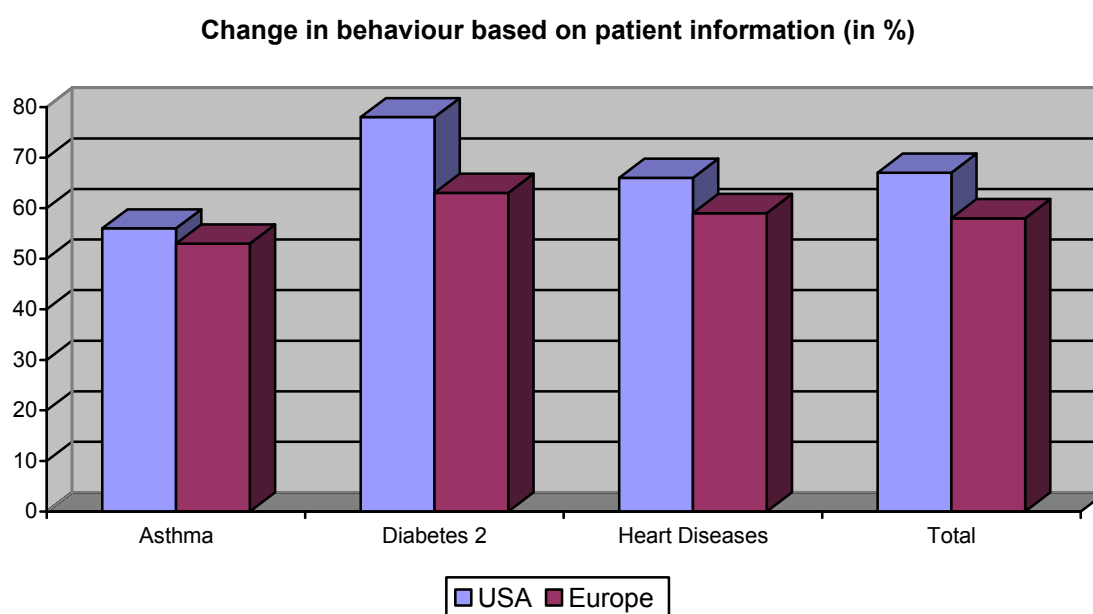


Figure 1: Change in behaviour based on patient information

Source: Double Helix Development

In addition, more than three quarters of those who permanently change their behaviour perceive a positive impact on their health. This proportion is nearly the same in the USA and Europe.

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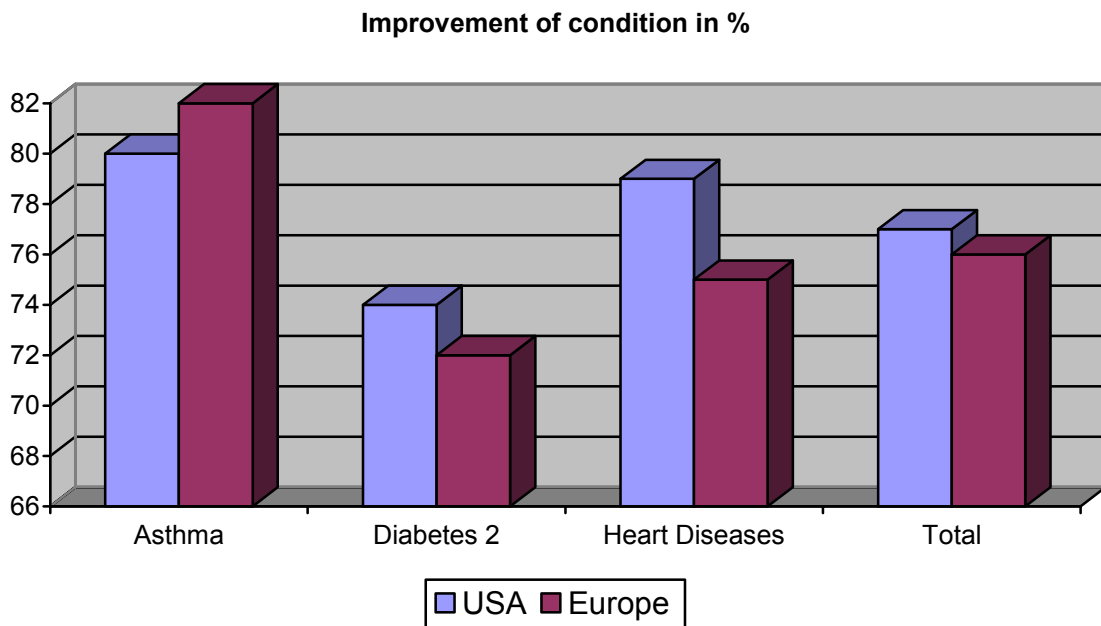


Figure 2: Improvement of condition
Source: Double Helix Development

The evaluation of the subjective perception demonstrates how important it is to provide information and knowledge about the state of health. It was shown that more than half of the patients from Europe and nearly 70% of the patients from the USA feel they do not have enough information on their condition and the treatment options possible. They are concerned that their lack of knowledge may worsen their condition. Figures 3, 4, and 5 show a summary of the results from Europe and the USA.

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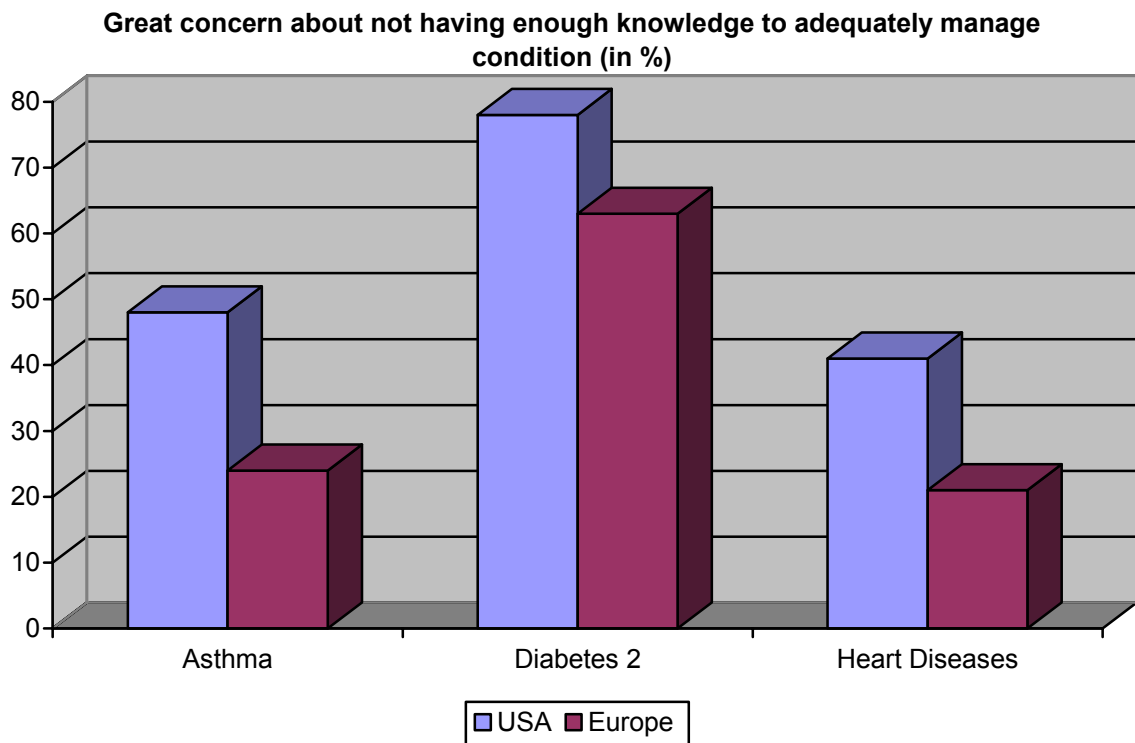


Figure 3: Great concern about not having enough knowledge to adequately manage condition
 Source: Double Helix Development

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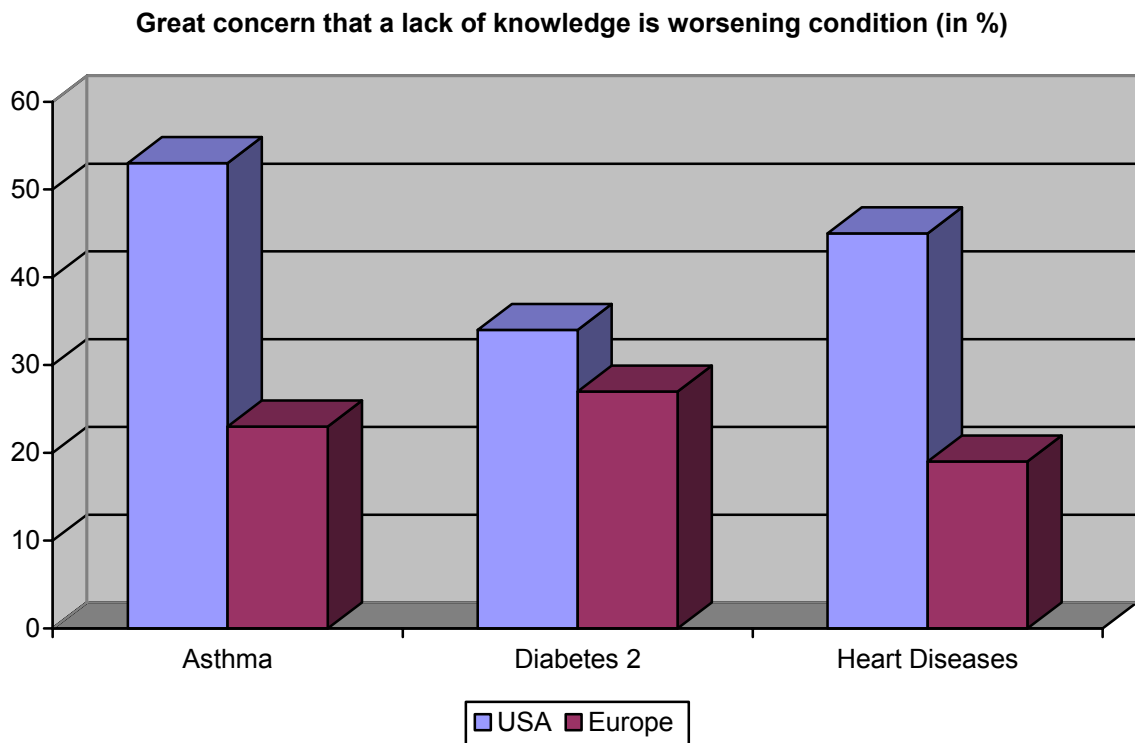


Figure 4: Great concern that a lack of knowledge is worsening condition
 Source: Double Helix Development

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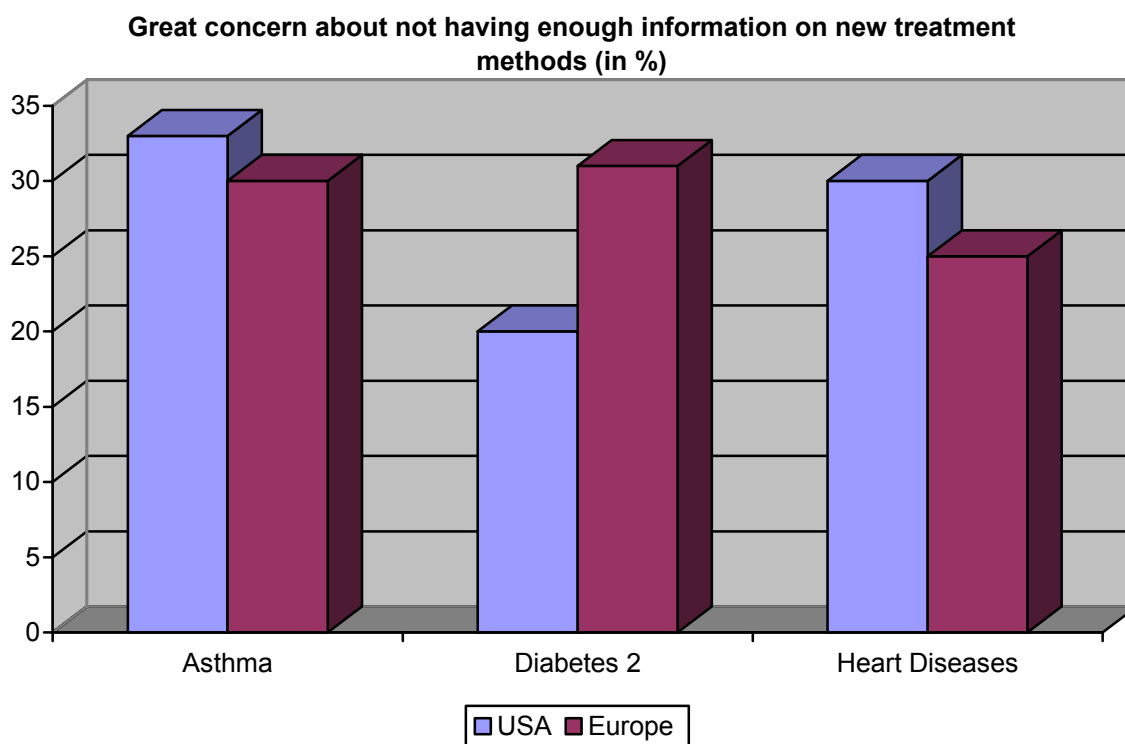


Figure 5: Great concern about not having enough information on new treatment methods

Source: Double Helix Development

The data also demonstrate that the basic knowledge of health is very inconsistent in Europe. Basic knowledge is defined as the knowledge the patients might be expected to have in order to adequately manage their condition.

Overall – across all three disease areas – US patients had a greater knowledge of their state of health. For instance, only 3% of European heart patients turned out to be “excellently” informed on their condition, versus 19% of the respondents from the USA.

But also among the individual European countries there are significant differences concerning the patients’ state of knowledge, as can be seen from the example of the diabetes patients. In UK 43% of the patients were “excellently” informed on their condition, which is a significantly higher percentage than in Italy (23%), Germany (17%), Spain (15%) and Poland. Asthma patients showed a similar result. The respondents from UK were again clearly better informed on their condition than e.g. those in Poland. The proportion of respondents who have a poor state of knowledge on heart diseases is surprisingly high in many European countries, such as Spain (92%), Italy (87%) and France (81%).

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Sources of information

Physicians and nurses are still the most important contact persons in health matters. 90% of the European respondents indicated to use them as their first source of information. An equally high percentage is seen in the USA. Printed media were mentioned as the second source of information, followed by TV/radio and the internet.

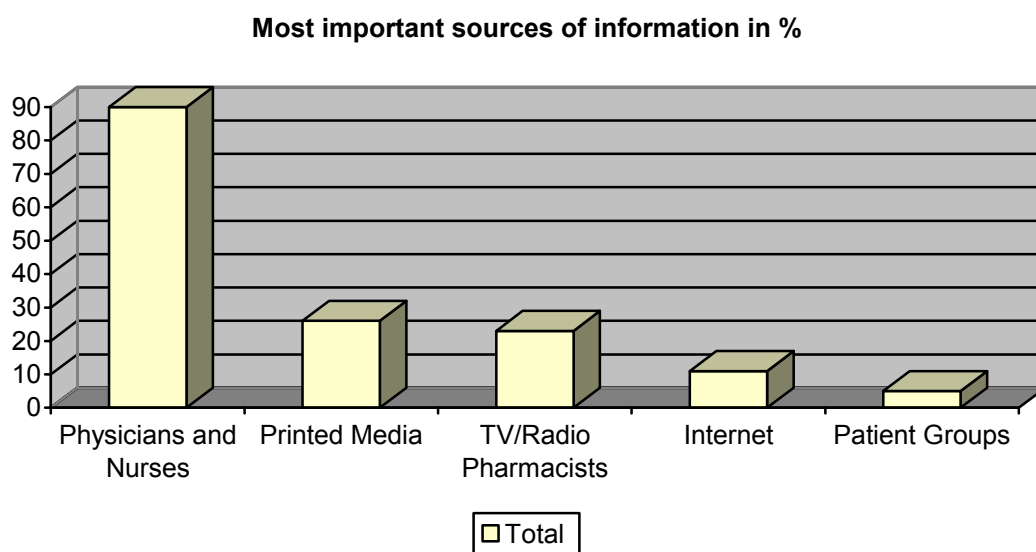


Figure 3: Most important sources of information in %

Quelle: Double Helix Development

The internet is most frequently used as source of information in Sweden (17%) and the USA (16%). These values are much higher than in the other countries like e.g. UK and Germany (10% each) or France (6%).

Physicians and pharmacists play an important role in patient information. 40% of the patients stated that they completely trust the information given by physicians, followed by pharmacists (29%) and advocacy groups (22%). The internet is evaluated as completely reliable by 6% of the respondents.

Physicians are the most trusted in Europe. 44% of the respondents from Europe stated they completely trust their physician. This percentage is significantly higher than in the USA (36%). Physicians are followed by pharmacists and advocacy groups. TV/radio, internet and printed media are completely trusted only to a low extent (9%, 5% and 6%, respectively).

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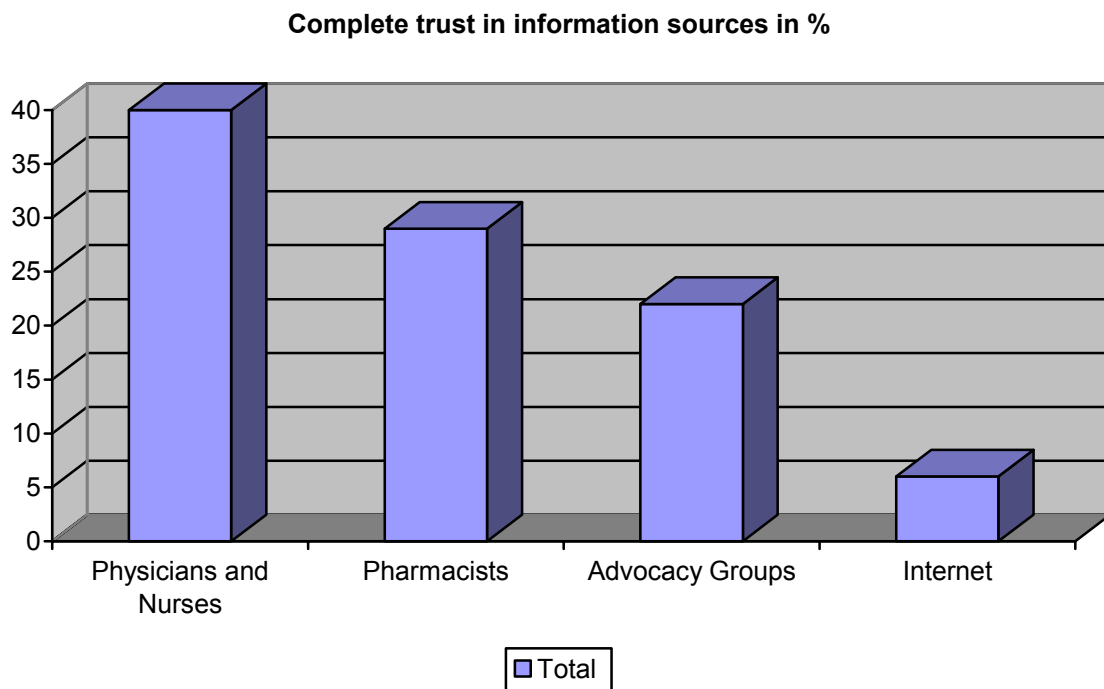


Figure 4: Complete trust in information sources (in %)

Quelle: Double Helix Development

Simon O'Neill, Director of Care and Policy, Diabetes UK, with more than 170,000 members the largest national diabetics association, states: "Patients with diabetes may only see their healthcare professionals for a few hours a year, though they have to manage their condition every day. Therefore, patient education must be a priority. The survey shows that the majority of people concerned acts based on their knowledge. That is what we have to address and what we have to continue working on."

The different degree of knowledge within Europe shows the importance of improved information and education in the area of healthcare. A better, cost-effective management and a successful prevention of diseases are possible only if the patients have access to, and a good understanding of, accurate information from reliable sources.

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Nach dem Abschluss des Studiums der Veterinärmedizin, arbeitete Herr Dr. Georg Vana in der pharmazeutischen Industrie, im Bereich Forschung und Entwicklung.

Nach 3 Jahren im Bereich Drug Discovery wechselte er 1998 zu Firma Pfizer, wo er als Medical Advisor für Herz-Kreislauf und Urologie Produkte verantwortlich war. In diese Zeit fiel auch die Produkteinführung von Viagra in Österreich.

2001 übernahm er die Leitung der Abteilung für Arzneimittelzulassung. Nach der Integration von Pharmacia, übernahm er im Jahr 2003 den neu gegründeten Geschäftsbereich Corporate Affairs.

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