

# GKEN

## Global Knowledge Exchange Network on healthcare

Industrialized nations across the globe are confronting a dramatic escalation in the cost of healthcare, increasingly frustrated consumers and overall declining health. The story is the same, no matter what language it is told in: the industrialized world's healthcare systems are unsustainable.

Aging populations, the growing burden of chronic disease, rising prices and the expanded use of expensive cutting-edge technology are among the most pressing challenges. Exacerbating the problem is a lack of international communication. Despite so many shared challenges, there are relatively few efforts to systematically learn from one another globally.

The Global Knowledge Exchange Network is an effort to bridge the gaps through innovative, international information sharing. Good ideas—from around the world--will be ferreted out, scrutinized and promoted.

We do not intend to reinvent the wheel; we have no interest in getting credit for inventing something new. Rather, GKEN aims to draw attention to the most promising models and, where necessary, lend the expertise to replicate those. Take, for example, costly, often-deadly hospital-acquired infections. GKEN does not seek to invent new solutions to the problem. Instead, we will analyze the most effective existing or emerging strategies and help others adopt them.

The GKEN initiative does not require legislation, international treaties or large sums of money. It is essentially, a vibrant “brain trust” that will put its muscle behind spreading promising solutions today. By identifying and promoting what works in healthcare, GKEN believes it can improve the health of all and help nations move to more efficient, more affordable, healthcare systems.

In the coming months, GKEN will select its initial round of well-vetted healthcare better practices. These new and emerging ideas will be detailed on an interactive web site and through other means, such as a Wikipedia-style platform, journal articles, video, conferences and training sessions. These tools will be available to anyone with an interest in improving health and the delivery of healthcare, whether it is an individual struggling to

manage their diabetes, a hospital looking to improve quality or a national government aiming to rein in costs.

Background: Wye River Group on Healthcare ([www.wrgh.org](http://www.wrgh.org)) has secured a three-year, unrestricted grant from CIGNA Foundation to develop and execute this unprecedented initiative. Wye River has assembled a prestigious international advisory board to lead the effort. Members of the board include: government officials, academics, healthcare professionals, patient advocates, insurance executives and community activists.

For too long, individual companies and countries have attempted to tackle the challenge of creating a sustainable healthcare system for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. GKEN believes, however, that the most promising solutions will come through lively international collaborations. Technology and the global economy underscore the need to think beyond the border.

In the past, groups examining the U.S. and European systems have concluded that the Europeans have figured out healthcare. They have universal coverage, centralized technology assessment and much lower spending as a share of GDP.

But a number of indicators suggest that the reality is far more complex. Other systems do not consistently function well and do not receive uniformly high patient satisfaction. Spending growth rates in European countries have been similar to the US over a four-decade span. Europeans frequently consult US policy advisors and corporate executives to learn about new approaches to organization and delivery. Many of the quality, safety, and disparity issues confronting the United States are likely present elsewhere, just not measured as well.

#### How is GKEN different?

Our research shows there is a need to identify and promote better healthcare practices across industrialized nations, particularly emerging practices that are focused on the process aspects of healthcare. Good ideas and models exist but do not get adequate attention. We are currently working with a wide range of organizations (see attached participant list for upcoming September 4-5 2008 Oxford UK meeting) and we are aggressively soliciting ideas from others to help us shape this effort and improve its potential for broad-based success.

We have begun by examining common healthcare challenges, and will explore the different approaches to address financing, delivery and consumer engagement.

We are creating an exchange that first identifies the best ideas, then determines what is relevant to enabling change and finally, what is replicable. It is clear that most countries are struggling with the same issues — chronic disease management, soaring costs and the integration of new technology to name a few. We solicit the opinions of a wide range of international thought leaders to ensure that this effort addresses their needs.

Each GKEN meeting is conducted as a round table, discussing what works and why and determining how a robust knowledge exchange might enhance opportunities for replicating better healthcare practices.

To have a meaningful impact on health and healthcare systems, the members of GKEN know that they must demonstrate the value of this effort to a wide audience. We are not talking about convening a conference or retracing the work of others. The Global Knowledge Exchange Network will be an ongoing, real-time source of solutions.

We will search out new ideas where opinions are not already solidified and polarized, and try to get underneath what people think can't be changed.

Ultimately we intend to spotlight well-vetted ideas with relevance to numerous cultures and healthcare delivery systems. Our focus will be programs and policies which optimize healthcare outcomes and promote individual and systems accountability.

Disease does not recognize political boundaries and we should not limit ourselves to insular thinking. Instead we must embrace our global community in sorting through solutions, together, collaboratively. This is the right time and the right approach to catalyze meaningful action across developed nations with the goal of improving our world's health and healthcare.

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