

11<sup>th</sup> September 2006

**RE: Sornosa Draft Report on amending the Limitations Directive on restrictions to the marketing of measuring devices containing Mercury.**

Dear Member of the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee,

We are contacting you regarding the Sornosa Report which you will vote on in the Environment Committee on September 13<sup>th</sup>. Specifically we are writing to you about the need to ban mercury-containing sphygmomanometers (blood pressure measuring devices) not only for sale to consumers **but also for sale to healthcare.**

**Mercury-containing sphygmomanometers pose an unnecessary risk**

Sphygmomanometers contain a great deal of mercury, and pose a large risk to patients, staff and the environment when there is leakage (which can happen during calibration) or breakage. Also sphygmomanometers are not necessarily properly disposed of - a recent survey in a new Member State showed that mercury waste in hospitals is not separated nor recycled but simply burned with other infectious waste or otherwise wrongly disposed of for instance flushed down the drain – producing mercury releases to air and the environment.

**Mercury free sphygmomanometers are available and are accurate**

Nine brands of mercury-free sphygmomanometers are available on the European market today, and many satisfy the strict precision criteria of professional organisations for the treatment of hypertension, arrhythmias and pre-eclampsia. In four European countries: Austria, the Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden, the experience from the use of mercury-free sphygmomanometers has been only positive. Digital calibration devices can produce an accuracy greater than that obtained by using mercury devices alone; and mercury sphygmomanometers are often not calibrated frequently enough. Exemptions to the ban on sphygmomanometers for the purpose of precision (with the exception of strain gauges) are unnecessary.

**Mercury-free medical devices are cost efficient and help create more jobs**

Breakages and leakages of mercury sphygmomanometers are quite costly to clean up, and proper segregated collection of defunct instruments must be (expensively) handled as hazardous waste. There are also the larger costs of removing mercury from waste streams and incinerator emissions. By contrast, the market for mercury-free devices will expand with this restriction, creating more jobs.

**This is your chance to protect people's health and help move Europe to a safer healthcare system, reversing decades of this sector's contribution to environmental contamination.**

**PLEASE VOTE TO BAN MERCURY SPHYGOMANOMETERS FOR BOTH PUBLIC AND PROFESSIONAL USE.**

Yours sincerely,

Irish Doctors Environmental Association IDEA  
Philip Michael, Chair  
155 Botanic Road, Glasnevin Dublin 9, IRELAND

J Christian Martineus, Vice President  
International Society of Doctors for the Environment (ISDE)  
Stoltenbergsgade 3 st tv,  
1576 Kobenhavn V, DENMARK  
Tel.: +45-33-120 111 / +46-70-760 38 36  
Dept of Rheumatology, University Hospital Lund (tel.: +46-46-17 10 00)

Hans Moshhammer, Co-Chair  
Austrian Doctors for the Environment - Arztinnen und Arzte fur eine gesunde Umwelt  
Grosse Mohrengasse 39/6  
1020 Wien, AUSTRIA  
Tel./Fax: +43 (0)1-216 34 22  
Email: [info@aegu.net](mailto:info@aegu.net)

Peter Ohnsorge, Managing Chairman  
European Academy for Environmental Medicine (EUROPAEM)  
Juliuspromenade 54  
D-97070 Würzburg  
Tel. +49 (0)931 - 353 48 30 Fax +49 (0)931 - 57 31 31  
Email: [ohnsorge@europaem.de](mailto:ohnsorge@europaem.de)

Frank Bartram, First Chairman  
Volker von Baehr, Managing Chairman  
German Professional Association for Environmental Medicine  
Siemensstraße 26 A  
D-12247 Berlin, GERMANY  
Tel.: +49 (0)30 7715 - 484 Fax: +49 (0)30 7715 - 484  
Email: [dbu@dbu-online.de](mailto:dbu@dbu-online.de)

Manfred Mühlberger, President  
Institut für Nachhaltigkeit im Gesundheitswesen (INGes) - Institute for Sustainable Healthcare  
Gusshausstr. 21/19  
A-1040 Wien, AUSTRIA  
Tel.: +43-1-503 72 08-0 Fax.: +43-1-503 72 08-30  
Email: [inges@eta.at](mailto:inges@eta.at) [www.inges.at](http://www.inges.at)

Jean Huss, President  
AKUT asbl  
137, rue de Mühlenbach  
L - 2168 Luxembourg  
Tel.: +352 22 33 75 Fax: +352 22 28 73  
Email: [info@akut.lu](mailto:info@akut.lu) Website: [www.akut.lu](http://www.akut.lu)

Women in Europe for a Common Future  
Sasha Gabizon, International Director  
PO Box 13047  
3507 LA, Utrecht, The NETHERLANDS  
Tel.: +31-30-2310300 Fax: +31-30-2340878  
<http://www.wecf.de/>

Dr Damien Downing, President  
British Society for Ecological Medicine (BSEM)  
PO Box 7, Knighton, LD7 1WT, UNITED KINGDOM  
Tel.: +44 1547-550339 Fax: +44 1547-550380  
Email: [info@ecomed.org.uk](mailto:info@ecomed.org.uk)  
[www.ecomed.org.uk](http://www.ecomed.org.uk)