



ECC Dublin Consumer Monthly

May 2006

This week, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) ruled that patients are entitled to reclaim the cost of treatment in another European country if they faced undue delay in receiving treatment at home. To coincide with this judgement, this month's e-bulletin focuses on the rights of EU citizens to access healthcare treatment in Europe.

The consumer query comes from a consumer who wants to know what is the European Health Insurance Card.

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- 1. What's bothering you? – Accessing healthcare treatment in Europe**
- 2. Consumer query of the month – What is a European Health Insurance card?**
- 3. European Commission wants to hear from you!**

www.eccdublin.ie : European consumer rights online

1. What's bothering you? – Accessing healthcare treatment in Europe

This week the ECJ ruled that the National Health Service in the UK should refund costs of medical treatment abroad if patients waited longer than clinicians advised, even if waiting time targets were met. The Court was ruling in the case of Mrs. Yvonne Watts who paid £3,900 for a hip operation in France. This is a significant case in that it illustrates the right of EU citizens to receive medical treatment in another European country through the E112 scheme.

In order to promote awareness of the healthcare treatment in Europe, ECC Dublin has recently published a leaflet entitled *Accessing Healthcare Treatment in Europe*. The leaflet explains what the European Health Insurance Card is and also the E112 scheme. Most people are familiar with the EHIC card as it replaced the well known E111 form in June 2004. The EHIC card is used by consumers travelling in Europe in order to access healthcare treatment in an emergency. All consumers are advised to get an EHIC card when on temporary stay in another European country.

The E112 scheme is less known but equally important because it allows patients to travel to another European country to avail of medical treatment where such treatment is unavailable in Ireland and there is an urgency for such treatment. People may remember in 2002 RTE's Northern Ireland Editor, Tommie Gorman, availing of the E112 scheme to access cancer treatment in Sweden. At the time Mr. Gorman claimed the E112 scheme probably saved his life because he was able to receive treatment in Sweden.

For the E112 scheme a patient requires his or her consultant to recommend receiving treatment overseas. The current practice in Ireland requires the patient to receive prior authorization from his or her local Health Service Executive before

travelling for treatment to another European country. Certain criteria must be fulfilled before authorisation is granted such as; the treatment concerned is not available in Ireland and there is an urgent medical necessity for the treatment.

This week's ECJ ruling may open the route to challenging the current criteria in Ireland.

To view ECC Dublin's Guide on *Accessing Healthcare Treatment in Europe*, [click here](#).

2. Consumer question of the month – What is the European Health Insurance Card?

In order to get necessary healthcare treatment while on temporary stay in another EU/EEA country or in Switzerland you need a European Health Insurance Card. The card is free and covers you for medical treatment in a public hospital. It is advisable to get an EHIC when you wish to travel in Europe and you can download an application form from www.ehic.ie. You can also obtain a form from your local Health Office. Your EHIC card is valid for two years.

For further information click here to read our new leaflet on *Accessing Healthcare Treatment in Europe*.

3. European Commission wants to hear from you!

Finally, the European Commission invites all consumers to have their say in how disputes can be resolved better in Europe. Take part in an online survey on www.econ.kuleuven.be/consumersatisfaction and be in with a chance to win online shopping vouchers and a trip for two to either Brussels or Paris. The survey ends on 31st May.

If you wish to email your consumer queries to us please do so to info@eccdublin.ie

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