WEISSE LISTE

For patients, for quality

The quality of health care in Germany is high. Nevertheless, there are differences between individual physicians or care institutions. The Weisse Liste is dedicated to making these differences transparent – via the Internet portal www.weisse-liste.de. The goal is to enable patients to choose the health care provider that is best for them. In turn, the providers themselves compete for patients in terms of quality.

Josip Stjepanovic

Anyone who falls ill or is in need of care wants to know that they are in good hands. This consideration provided the impetus for the Weisse Liste project. But how do I as a patient or a person in need of care, or indeed a relative, know which care facility is right for me? Who is the specialist for my condition, who is the best person to provide for my needs? And can I expect all health service providers to offer the same or similar quality?

Transparency as the basis of quality

The Weisse Liste aims to provide citizens with direction and enable them to make informed choices. Its purpose is to prepare and provide access to information on the services and quality offered by health care providers in a way that non-specialists can understand. It aims to create transparency and

thereby to ensure that providers compete fairly to provide the best quality. In turn, this competition benefits the populace through improved quality across the board.

The background to this is that more and more people nowadays want to be involved in the decisions made about their health care, with the patient thereby taking an active part in the healthcare system. Whereas the quality of health care is on the whole high in Germany, there are still considerable differences between providers.

)) *Transparency in matters of quality helps patients to make decisions. But it also creates healthy competition among healthcare providers. As a result, the overall quality of care improves.*

Uwe Schwenk, Director of the program "Improving Healthcare – Informing Patients

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Objective: reliable guide to health care

The core component of the project is the portal www.weisse-liste.de which has been online since 2008. The title stands for an orderly overview (Liste = "List") and indicates a strong affinity with the fields of medicine and health (Weisse = "White"). The portal provides highly practical help for its users in their search for the right provider in their area or as the case may be, nationwide. In this, it differs from other mostly commercial services: first of all, it is carries absolutely no advertising and is free of charge. But more than this: there is a strong emphasis throughout on the quality of the information in all areas, underscored for example by the use of scientifically developed questionnaires or measures designed to prevent the manipulation of information.

Three key project topics

The Weisse Liste started out as a hospital comparison site but there now many major areas on which information is provided. These differ considerably in the data on which they are based and in their objectives:

- General practitioners and specialists
- Hospitals
- Care facilities

More than a online portal

The Weisse Liste sees itself as more than just a portal; it is also a platform for projects. Its aim is to bring together partners with the same goals and to cooperate with them both in developing new information sectors and in disseminating the results. The project is funded jointly by the Bertelsmann Stiftung and the umbrella organisation of the main patients' and consumers' associations. The patients' mandatory of the German federal government, Claudia Schmidtke, is patron of the Weisse Liste and since 2011, Weisse Liste gemeinnützige GmbH, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Bertelsmann Stiftung, has been responsible for the operation and ongoing development of the portal.

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