
OFFICIAL OPENING

Welcome address

***Mr Johannes Burges, President, Bundesfachverband der Arzneimittel-Hersteller (BAH),
Member of the WSMI and AESGP Boards***

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you in the name of the Bundesfachverband der Arzneimittel-Hersteller – the German Association representing the Self-Medication Industry – to this joint Annual Meeting of AESGP – the Association of the European Self-Medication Industry – and WSMI – the World Self-Medication Industry.

This meeting is taking place in Berlin, the capital of a re-unified and free Germany. It proves what constant and never wavering policies can ultimately achieve when they pursue their vision in spite of most difficult circumstances. Again, welcome to Berlin.

Visions in their broadest sense are also the topics of our meetings. I refer to the vision to create a platform for the informed and knowledgeable citizens that will allow them, in cases of minor ailments, to decide on their own, whether she or he ought to consult a physician or to practice self-medication for treatment or prevention. In this context, two matters are of elementary significance:

Self-medication should be used responsibly on the basis of adequate knowledge, and the medicines chosen must be free of prescription and of a highest quality standard. The discussions concerning the extent and scope of these two points, plus other essential parameters for self-medication, will be the central subject of our meeting during the next three days.

On these premises, self-medication in Germany is on the right track. This is evidenced by a survey published by the Bundesfachverband der Arzneimittel-Hersteller in April of this year. This is the fourth survey. The first was carried out in 1986, and from then on one was done every four years.

The essential results are the following:

- Within an average of a yearly quarter, self-medication is used for non-chronic minor ailments by approxi-

mately half of the population over sixteen years of age.

- The extent of self-care depends on the severity of the ailment. The number of those who will consult a physician increases in accordance to the severity of the ailment and the decrease of personal performance and productivity.
- The knowledge of the German population in the field of medicines is growing. Compared to 1994, the percentage of population who think that their knowledge of medicines is good, or very good, has increased by 8%.

This leads to the conclusion that self-medication is a most important factor to people and that they know, according to the nature of the ailment, when it is necessary to consult a physician or rely on self-medication.

I would also like to point out two other important factors:

- More than 80 % of the German population now ask in pharmacies for their specific self-medication medicines with their brandnames. This represents an increase since 1994 and can be taken as a popular vote on how satisfied people are with the quality of self-medication medicines.
- The yearly per household expenditure for self-medication from 1994 to 1998 has increased from Deutsche Mark 280.00 to Deutsche Mark 320.00. Nevertheless, self-medication is facing an economic stagnation due to the fact that, in Germany, the higher co-payments for reimbursed medicines have caused a reduction in sales volume by unit, and fewer customer visits to pharmacies. These expenditures clearly indicate the important contribution towards the financial discharge of the public health securities now and in the future.

With this short summary, I would like to end my report on the situation of self-medication in Germany.



