

Question for written answer E-006747/2017
to the Commission
Rule 130
Claude Rolin (PPE)

Subject: Sale of patients' data in hospitals in Belgium

In Belgium recently, around 15 of the country's 100 or so hospitals have sold their patients' confidential data to the American medical data processing multinational, Quintiles IMS. The data in question concern the patients' treatment (course of treatment, pathology, medical examinations, consultants) and the sums invoiced by the hospitals to mutual benefit insurance companies. For Quintiles IMS, this is a deal that offers plenty of potential advantages as it could sell this data on to the highest bidder, and in particular pharmaceutical companies seeking to fine-tune their marketing strategy.

I am opposed to all commercialisation of health. Patients do not know that their data has been recorded and may be passed on for mercenary purposes. Patients' data should only be used for their benefit and within an ethical framework. Health data are of inestimable value for those who wish to profit from them. Transactions of this kind must be strictly regulated, with the data involved rendered strictly anonymous.

Will the Commission speak out against practices of this kind? What will it propose to combat the issue of patients' medical data being used as merchandise, without their permission? Does the Commission have other figures available or know of similar cases at EU level?