

SERBIA: Health & Pharmaceutical

Serbian Law on Patients' Rights comes into force

The Law on Patients' Rights (Zakon o pravima pacijenata, "Official Gazette of RS" no. 45/2013") came into force on 30 May 2013. The Law promulgates a catalogue of general patients' rights, amongst which certain rights are introduced for the first time in Serbia (such as the right to quality healthcare, right to a second professional opinion, right to prophylactic measures, etc.).

The main novelty concerns changes in the manner in which protection of patients' rights is organized. Until the end of November 2013, each municipality has to appoint a so-called "Advisor for protection of patients' rights" („savetnik za zaštitu prava pacijenata") ("Advisor") and the Health Council („Savet za zdravlje"). These new authorities will replace the current "Protector of patients' rights" („zaštitnik pacijentovih prava") appointed by directors of healthcare institutions. This change is designed to ensure impartiality in handling patients' complaints. Healthcare institutions will be obliged to display data on Advisor and allow Advisor to access medical records and other information upon request. The main role of the Health Council is to monitor and report on the protection of patients' rights to the Ministry of Health and the Ombudsman.

Bylaws regulating in detail the procedure for handling patients' complaints are expected to be passed within the following three months.

The Law requires healthcare institutions to visibly display an up-to-date list of healthcare professionals and organizational units on their premises, for the purpose of enabling patients to exercise their right to request second opinion on their health condition.

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