



EU wants to restrict the use of ethanol

A fools' errand

An ongoing review by the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) concerning ethanol (commonly known as alcohol) could severely restrict its use in the future. This would have far-reaching consequences for hospitals, medical and dental practices and care homes.

The availability and use of ethanol could be severely restricted—or even banned—as a result of health and safety regulations. This includes essential products such as hand and surface disinfectants. One particularly drastic proposal is to classify ethanol as a reproductive toxin. Under German labour law, this would result in a blanket ban on women of child-bearing age handling the substance—a move that could effectively cripple the healthcare system.

“Just a few days ago, Deutscher Zahnärzte Tag, the German Dentists' Congress, highlighted the bureaucratic madness choking medical practices and called for a radical reduction in red tape. This latest farce from Brussels is emblematic of the relentless bureaucratic overreach,” said Konstantin von Laffert, Vice President of

the German Dental Association (BZÄK), commenting on the EU's plans.

In order to guarantee access to safe and hygienic medical care, stakeholders in the German healthcare system unanimously agree that the classification of alcohol (ethanol) as a CMR substance (carcinogenic/mutagenic/reprotoxic) must be avoided at all costs.

Such a classification would be both disproportionate and unfounded, as it is based solely on studies of the (abusive) oral consumption of ethanol mixtures—in other words, drinking alcohol. Interestingly, the consumption of alcoholic beverages would remain perfectly legal.

“Ethanol is effective, safe, and indispensable when used as a disinfectant, medication, or medical product,” emphasised von Laffert. “Without it, the protection

of vulnerable patient groups, especially in hospitals, outpatient care, and during pandemics, could no longer be guaranteed. Possible exemptions would likely prove ineffective given the immense regulatory and bureaucratic hurdles involved.”

“A scientifically unfounded ban on ethanol would compromise health care and undermine hygiene standards,” he continued. “The use of expensive alternatives would only increase the financial burden on the health system. After the recent attempt by the health authorities to ban so-called ‘final wipe disinfection’, this is yet another bureaucratic obstacle thrown at medical practices already suffering from severe staff shortages.”

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