

# Taking up the EAPC challenge

New EAPC President, Marilène Filbet, talks to Andrew Hoy, Editor of *EJPC*, about her expectations for the coming year.

## “What are your hopes and aspirations for the EAPC?”

One of the goals of the EAPC is to promote palliative care in European countries, and one of my goals is to continue the work already started by my predecessors in this field. The level to which palliative care has been developed is very different according to the country and the model concerned. Nevertheless, I believe that what unites us are the common ideals of improving the quality of treatment for patients needing palliative care, and of extending access to it for all patients. In particular, access needs to be extended to those suffering from pathologies other than cancer, and the elderly. To achieve this goal, it seems important to work on several fronts:

- To put forward, at the European level, standards of training, organisation and care that can be approved and accepted by all, following on from the work of the task forces
- To obtain a European recommendation affirming access to palliative care as a human right (as in the law enacted in France in 1999)
- To have palliative medicine recognised at the European level as being a specialist field, and to make the study of the subject a compulsory part of medical degrees in order to harmonise the different qualifications
- To harmonise the availability of opioids in these countries.

I consider it important to bring into the EAPC as many of the national associations as possible to increase our representation, to allow greater exchange of experiences, and to arrive at a common language – that of our patients.

## How do you see France's palliative care developing in the next five years?

Thanks to the work of the French palliative care association (Société française d'accompagnement et de soins palliatifs [SFAP], great progress has been made since the first palliative care unit was opened in 1987. There has been a three-year development plan, between 1999 and 2002, allowing palliative care facilities

to be developed by way of a specific budget. We have also seen the law of 1999 guaranteeing patients' right to benefit from palliative care, thus developing hospital palliative care teams. Since then, other development proposals have been put in place, and palliative care is no longer financed by way of a specific budget, but is instead being included in the cancer plan.

However, a number of challenges remain. Development has not been uniform across the whole of France, posing questions about the equality of access; palliative care is mostly considered to be of use for cancer patients, and, with regard to those facilities that are not based on acute care (medium-stay, long-stay geriatric), not all have been given enough recognition, and so lack funding for their activities. There is also the risk of favouring the creation of beds that do not fit the quality criteria set out by SFAP.

## What would you like the EAPC to do during your presidency?

I would like to give our younger colleagues the chance to work in the task forces. I consider it important to create links and perhaps more visibility by way of our communication tools, such as the website and the journals.

The EAPC meetings are a great success and, of course, I hope that the research forum in Venice and the congress in Budapest will be even better, thanks to everyone's input.

## What would you like the EJPC to do during your presidency?

The *EJPC* is the only European journal translated into French, giving all French speakers access to the rest of Europe and facilitating information exchange. I would like the number of French-speaking subscribers to increase, to maintain its publication in two languages. The journal gives a voice to many healthcare professionals in different fields, with original approaches that are enriching for us all. I would like to encourage all authors to submit material to the journal. A more interactive format, debating ideas and exchanging information, could also be launched.”

Marilène Filbet, President of the EAPC

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