

Palliative care development: a challenge for the future

“ The main goal of the European Association for Palliative Care (EAPC) is to increase awareness and promote the development and dissemination of palliative care at scientific, clinical and social levels, within Europe. Our motto is, ‘One voice, one vision’. The EAPC is still a young association, but from the beginning, our individual and collective members have been increasing, and we now represent more than 50,000 people.

The next EAPC congress will be held in Budapest, 17 years after the first congress in Paris. It will be a great success if we consider the number of abstracts sent – more than 1,000 – and the active participation of caregivers from Eastern Europe. This is after the great success of the research forum in Venice last year, organised by the research network.

Our movement is growing fast and, at the same time, new countries are integrating with our European organisation. We should also consider North African countries to establish a link and promote development as we have many patients in common. We have many challenges to face. How can we develop palliative care services for every person who needs them, not only for cancer patients but also other patients with severe illnesses such as HIV or neurological diseases across the ages from children to the elderly? How can we increase awareness of the need for support for families and relatives, not only during the patient's illness but also after their death?

The EAPC task force on palliative care development in Europe has carried out very interesting work and you can see from the atlas and maps produced that there is a lot to do to improve equity of access to palliative care services for all who need them. There are many barriers to palliative care development, including a lack of training for caregivers and physicians, and the task force for education has already published recommendations for nurses training in palliative care. The recommendations for the undergraduate training for physicians will be presented in

Budapest. With a view to facilitating exchanges for clinical experiences, a task force is working to set up a list of available clinical placements.

The lack of knowledge in palliative care and the need for more research can also be a barrier and the EAPC research network is working on several studies. I encourage you to join the next research forum in Trondheim in 2008.

There is a lack of availability of, and access to, opioids and we should advocate at a European level, breaking the myths around opioids and opiophobia. We need to propose minimal standards for care and for organisation of palliative services. The EAPC task force is very open to other organisations – and organisations such as the International Association for Hospice and Palliative Care (IAHPC), Help the Hospices and many others, are collaborating in joining forces so that we can reach our goals more easily. We are collaborating on many initiatives, including:

- The Declaration of Venice – which was set up during the last forum in Venice, in collaboration with the IAHPC and all the other palliative care organisations promoting research all around the world
- The World Hospice and Palliative Care Day, which aims to raise public awareness of palliative care through communicating with the media. The next World Hospice and Palliative Care Day will be held on 6 October 2007 and the theme will be ‘Across the Ages – From Children to Older People’
- The list of essential medicine in Salzburg, organised by the IAHPC
- The World Health Organization (WHO) collaboration to produce a booklet for promoting palliative care for older and paediatric palliative care.

There is information about the above on the EAPC website and you can easily download all the documents you need. All of these and many other subjects will be discussed in Budapest during the conference and I hope to see you there in June.

Marilène Filbet

EAPC Chair, CHU, Lyon, France