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# The EAPC Research Network meets in Trondheim

The European Association for Palliative Care (EAPC) is about to hold its 5th Research Forum, in Trondheim, Norway. Two of the leading figures in the Association, **Augusto Caraceni** and **Stein Kaasa**, outline the importance of research in palliative care

When modern palliative care research was first established, an academic affiliation was promoted by many pioneers. Despite this, from the mid-1960s until the end of the last century, most of the focus of palliative care was directed towards service development.

In 1996, the gap that developed between service development and research was narrowed through the establishment, by Franco De Conno, of the European Association for Palliative Care Research Network (EAPC RN). During the initial phase, the EAPC RN focused primarily on the development of clinical guidelines.<sup>1-3</sup> These guidelines were instrumental as a first step towards evidence-based medicine. The opioid guidelines in particular have been used extensively in clinical practice across Europe.<sup>1</sup>

Modern computer technologies have provided new opportunities to develop evidence-based guidelines more effectively. As a consequence, guidelines today need to be evidence-driven with systematic evaluation of

the existing literature as the basis.<sup>4</sup> These evidence-based proceedings have uncovered the limited amount of high-quality research in palliative care. These observations are supported through several national and international evaluations of palliative care research.

## Worldwide research initiatives

Improvement in research requires worldwide initiatives, such as the new team grants in Canada and the supportive and palliative care initiative in the UK (known as SuPac).<sup>5,6</sup> The EU has also recently funded several research initiatives – the European Palliative Care Research Collaborative (EPCRC);<sup>7</sup> the EU Public Health Executive Agency health information project; another project aimed at describing best practices in palliative care in Europe; the PRISMA project (reflecting the positive diversity of European priorities for research and measurement in end-of-life care); and Optimising Cancer Patient Care through the Advancement of Research and Education

(OPCARE).<sup>8</sup> New scientific results need to be presented, discussed and put into clinical context if appropriate. The EAPC RN had realised this need in 1999 and took the initiative in organising the first EAPC Research Forum, in 2000 in Berlin, with 200 submitted abstracts. Since then, it has organised a Research Forum every second year, and the number of accepted abstracts and participants has risen steadily. For this year's conference, which takes place in Trondheim, Norway, on 29–31 May, 100 abstracts have been accepted for oral presentation in parallel sessions and 356 abstracts have been accepted for poster presentation.

### An open network

The scientific programme is founded on the submitted work by palliative care scientists and carefully evaluated by an international panel of reviewers. This review process is conducted blindly: reviewers do not know the names of the authors, nor the institution or country in which the research was conducted. We believe that this process helps us to select, in a transparent way, the best work to be presented at the Forum.

The EAPC RN aims to be an active partner in the further development of palliative care research in Europe, and to take part in worldwide collaboration. Its steering committee has seen the need to 'open up' the network to all participants who are active in palliative care research. Through this change in structure, we foresee that initiatives for international research within the context of the EAPC will come from individuals and groups across Europe. For more detailed information and communication, please contact the chair of the EAPC RN, Professor Stein Kaasa (see Box 1).

### Junior International Forum

Recently, the EAPC RN has announced the establishment of a Junior International Forum (JIF), set up to foster international collaboration and provide a meeting place for PhD and post-doctoral students and other young scientists. The first meeting of the JIF will take place at the Trondheim Research Forum in May. For more information, please visit the EAPC website (see Box 1).

Palliative care is broad and multidisciplinary, and that is mirrored in the scientific programme.<sup>9</sup> The oral presentations in plenary sessions, based on the submitted abstracts, make up an international blend covering the

#### Box 1. Find out more about Trondheim

- For more information about the 5th Research Forum of the EAPC, please visit the Forum's website: [www.eapcnet.org/Research2008/Index.html](http://www.eapcnet.org/Research2008/Index.html)
- To contact Stein Kaasa, Chair of the EAPC RN, email: [stein.kaasa@ntnu.no](mailto:stein.kaasa@ntnu.no)

economic aspects of care, advanced directives, cost and quality, variations in palliative care, innovation in symptom control (such as treatment of breakthrough pain with a novel nasal application of fentanyl), translational research in the field of the pharmacogenomics of opioid analgesia, research and clinical guidelines on pain, depression and cachexia. For more information, please visit the 'programme at a glance' on the EAPC website (see Box 1).

The Research Forum is also a place to hear about new scientific work, to meet collaborators in formal and informal settings, and to meet new individuals active in palliative care and in palliative care research.

A special pre-conference seminar will be held in Lofoten, Norway, on 24–27 May. Participants are invited to attend the parallel group activities and lectures by invited guest speakers. The seminar is organised in collaboration between the EAPC RN and the EPCRC and will be CME (Continuing Medical Education)-accredited. For more information, please visit the EAPC website (see Box 1).

On behalf of the Local Organising Committee and the Scientific Committee, we will be happy to welcome all to the 5th EAPC Research Forum in Trondheim.

#### References

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9. EAPC. [www.eapcnet.org](http://www.eapcnet.org)

*Augusto Caraceni, Chair of the Scientific Committee;  
Stein Kaasa, Chair of the EAPC RN, Chair of the Local  
Organising Committee*

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