



NEWSLETTER

No 43 - October/November 2000

EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR PALLIATIVE CARE

News from head office

The Board of the European Association for Palliative Care takes great pleasure in welcoming the Royal College of Nursing and the Romanian Society of Palliatology and Thanatology, its 22nd and 23rd members, respectively.

The Royal College of Nursing

The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) is the UK's professional body for nurses and leads the way in promoting the art and science of nursing.

The RCN Palliative Nursing Group (PNG) is a nationwide network of members sharing the same area of interest and is relevant to nurses involved in palliative care in all settings.

The aim of the group is to increase awareness of the benefits of the nursing contribution to palliative care and improve services to patients and their families through influencing health policy development and education. The group actively promotes equity of access and quality of palliative care for cancer and non-cancer patients. It also has links with other organisations such as the National Council for Hospice and Specialist Palliative Care Services, the International Palliative Care Network and the Scottish Partnership Agency for Cancer and Palliative Care.

The group celebrates its newly formed links with EAPC and looks forward to establishing this network further.

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The Romanian Society of Palliatology and Thanatology

The Romanian Society of Palliatology and Thanatology (SRPT) was set up on 25 June 1998 in Bucharest and works on a national level. The society is a non-governmental and non-profit association.

A very important step obtained by the association was the official recognition of palliative care as a specialty by the Romanian Ministry of Health and this is supported by the

Academy of Medical Science. As a consequence, since the beginning of this year, physicians following a three-month course will now be recognised as specialists in that field.

The Society has to date 300 members including physicians (for example, oncologists, geriatricians, family physicians, general practitioners, anaesthetists, surgeons, neurologists, specialists in infectious diseases) as well as nurses, psychologists, social workers, physiotherapists, chaplains and volunteers. The structure of the SRPT comprises four departments: pain therapy, oncology, geriatrics and AIDS. It has set up various branches in a number of regions in the country. It is hoped in the very near future to develop a network throughout the country.

The aims of the Society and its current programmes are the following:

- To co-ordinate all necessary efforts to introduce the concept of palliative care in medical practice
- To organise yearly educational programmes for palliative care and geriatrics (this coming October will be the 4th edition) and stimulate the medical profession and increase public awareness of this important medical field
- To improve the quality of life of the terminally ill, particularly in the geriatric field
- To find support for the publication of books and periodicals
- To organise conferences, workshops and congresses
- To print the annual review *Palliative Medicine*, and the quarterly bulletin *News in Palliative Medicine*.

SRPT organised its first National Conference of Palliative Care entitled 'Palliative care - an integral and obligatory part of contemporary medicine' in Sinaia from 28 to 30 October 1999. This conference attracted wide international participation with leaders from all over Europe.

Another conference was held at the end of May 2000 at Iasi, an important cultural and university centre in Romania. The theme of this conference was 'The management of palliative care'.

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NATIONAL REPORTS

■ Switzerland A meeting between Geneva and Sarajevo. Working towards closer collaboration?

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Is palliative care sufficiently up-to-date for a healthcare system recovering from the aftermath of a five-year war? This is the frank question which, as a Swiss doctor working in an economically privileged environment, I initially asked myself. We spent a couple of hours bringing colleagues (GPs and specialists) up-to-date at a poorly equipped outpatients' department at Ilidza, in the suburbs of Sarajevo. These colleagues see at least 40 patients every day and have extremely poor resources. Patients turn up without an appointment and form long queues with varying degrees of patience behind the door of the doctor's surgery. The luxury of having time for training or for multidisciplinary discussions about patients is totally inconceivable.

Course participants responded with enthusiasm and motivation. Much to our surprise, a well-organised community palliative care unit is already functioning within an outpatients' department in the heart of the capital. It is run by nurses and doctors trained in the UK and supported by UK nuns.

Project HOPE

Project HOPE is a non-governmental organisation founded in the USA more than 40 years ago. Its new Swiss subsidiary commissioned the Department of Community Medicine at the Geneva University Hospital to train the nurses and GPs working in Sarajevo. This project was subsequently approved and sponsored by the Direction de Développement et de la Co-opération (DDC) – Development and Co-operation Directorate – an official government agency of the Swiss Confederation. The first series of 11 one-week seminars over two years was completed in June 2000. The geriatric and palliative module was presented as the tenth seminar and our audience was already convinced of the merits of permanent training. Interactive and multidisciplinary events were paramount. Obviously, the message of palliative care responded to the questions and needs of these colleagues. A

further series of seminars is scheduled with the same support and will be geared towards a new group of doctors, nurses and Bosnian male nurses.

NJEGA

NJEGA (Palliative Care in the Home) is a pilot unit and the first service of its kind in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is integrated within the network of primary care services in the region of Sarajevo in partnership with the 'Sisters of the Cross and Passion' – a charitable, non-governmental organisation. The team includes three nurses and two female doctors among others, one nurse and one doctor having completed a training period at St Gemma's Hospice in Leeds, England. This group works in a network with specialists (oncologists, social workers, representatives of various religions, for instance), has access to morphine (still a rare privilege in this country) and provides support to other outpatient clinics in Sarajevo and surrounding areas. Those benefiting from the courses run within the scope of the Hope project came precisely from these Dom Zdravije (literally, 'health homes'). This is a wide-ranging service based on the optimum standards extolled by the EAPC. A desire for further development has already been expressed.

Sarajevo Hospice

Sarajevo Hospice was created in 1998 as a non-governmental Bosnian organisation to promote the concept and practice of palliative care.

Objectives include the networking of primary health services, support for the leading home palliative care service, the promotion of hospital palliative care, the creation of a hospice and the incorporation of palliative care in university faculties. Links have been forged with colleagues in neighbouring countries such as Croatia, Slovenia and Hungary as well as within the UK. Accessibility to essential medicines is one concern as is the circulation of information to all healthcare professions. The association is sponsored by the British Embassy, the World Health Organization, the canton of Sarajevo and some private and public Bosnian and foreign companies.

In the aftermath of a five-year war in which this country was torn apart by violence, palliative care has already proved dynamic within a healthcare structure undergoing complete reconstruction. EAPC members welcome these new colleagues with open arms. Their resources are limited and the supply of essential drugs such as morphine still poses a problem. Accessibility to the excellent services that they propose is still extremely limited for all those persons warranting a palliative approach.



The training requirements of GPs are immense. We therefore propose a call for solidarity. We will next meet some of our Bosnian friends at Palermo, but meanwhile, here are a few addresses at which they can be contacted and informed of our interest.

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Project HOPE

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SPECIAL BOOK OFFER! Radcliffe Medical Press and EAPC are offering members the chance to buy Lymphoedema by Robert Twycross at £30.00 (rrp £35.00).

To order: Tel: +44 (0) 1235 528820. Fax /528830.

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7th Congress of the European Association for Palliative Care – Onlus

1 – 5 April 2001, Palermo, Italy

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We would like to thank Drs Necchi and Sorci, certified auditors of accounts, who have helped with the account-keeping and provided financial advice free of charge for several years.

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