



Nothing About Us, Without Us!

Press release

27 November 2010

Compared to Western Europe, Central and Eastern Europeans are 25% more likely to die of cancer before the age of 75

Bucharest, 27 November. The risk of dying of cancer before the age of 75 is 25% higher for people living in Central and Eastern Europe than for those from Western Europe. It is mainly related to problems of access to quality and varied treatment – stated the representatives of the European Cancer Patient Coalition (ECPC), which organized the first Eastern European cancer patient conference CEE Learning and Sharing - "*Bridging Cancer Care*" in Bucharest.

In Romania, approximately 430,000 people live with cancer. According to Laburnet Anca, director of the Romanian Society for Cancer, 15,000 new cancer cases occur every year, which means that on average 57 people daily get a cancer diagnosis.

In Europe, one out of three people suffers from cancer and the disease kills one out of four. Every day, there are over 6,000 new cases of breast cancer, which is the most common type of the disease among women, accounting for 30.9% of cases and 16.7% of deaths. Prostate cancer is the cancer type most commonly diagnosed among men, representing 21.4% of cases and 10.4% of deaths.

Tom Hudson, President of ECPC, spoke about the initiatives of the organization, which can be targeted at Romania and Eastern Europe. "*We rely on identification of the members of the Parliament that are keen to support the cancer cause, so that we can influence this at the state's legislative level. There is still much to do in Central and Eastern Europe,*" he said.

Simona Ene, Vice-president of ECPC, explained that although the basic cancer treatment is available in Romania, and the waiting time for the operation is often shorter than in the Great Britain, there are nevertheless important issues related to access to treatment and funding. "*Access to new treatments, the most expensive ones, is difficult in Romania, and it creates long waiting lists. With regard to funding, the problem does not lie in budget total amount, but in the way it is spent.*" .

Viorica Cursaru, president of organization of patients with multiple myeloma Myeloma Euronet, said that one of the main problems is that European Parliament's resolutions are not directly implemented by the EU but leave their enforcement up to the governments. "*There is an enormous gap between the promises the governments and their actions. Let's take an example from the hematologic diseases area: the European protocol on treatment with Velcade (bortezomib) was signed in 2007, but in Romania, patients had access to this treatment only two years later,*" - said Viorica Cursaru.

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Another ECPC initiative is the establishment of a video webcast that will stream on the Internet multilingual shows that will attract attention to the problems of cancer patients of the European Union. Through the FACE (Forum Against Cancer in Europe) activity, ECPC has organized a series of workshops to provide a link between patients, policy makers and specialists, located for and foremost in Brussels but also in the Central and Eastern European countries. As a result of these efforts, the local membership will publish the reports on various policy issues, such as access to treatment, clinical trials, or access to information. The FACE policy forum has the support of 80 Members of the European Parliament.

Recently, ECPC launched a Written Declaration so as to call for the improvement of the coordination of cancer research in the European Union. In the last three weeks, 182 MEPs have signed this call from the cancer patients which includes MEPs from Eastern Europe. At the Bucharest Conference, ECPC called on the patient organisations there to support this written declaration.

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