Palliative care in Europe

Every year 2.5 million European citizens die due to terminal diseases. Being able to manage their symptoms and improve their quality of life is a priority.

Many people suffering from life-threatening illnesses experience great suffering and pain and are in great need of palliative care, a means of alleviating symptoms and improving their quality of life. However, problems including fragmentation of services and late referrals prevent many patients from receiving the appropriate palliative care at the right time.

The goal of the EU-funded project INSUP-C (Patient-centered palliative care pathways in advanced cancer and chronic disease) was to optimise palliative care
delivery in Europe and predict future healthcare needs. In this context, researchers investigated the current state of palliative care across Europe in order to identify any requirements for promising practice.

Project partners considered the kind of palliative care provided by different types of institutions such as hospitals and residence homes, and at home. They collected descriptions of integrated care models in cancer and advanced diseases, and generated systematic reviews with the support of the European Association for Palliative Care (EAPC Onlus) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

Research results showed that palliative care interventions mainly aimed at reducing suffering and less at grief and bereavement care. Scientists concluded that the best practice required positioning palliative care in the chain of care and to arrange a regional contact point.

Partners formulated a framework of integrated palliative care models for malignant and non-malignant diseases such as chronic heart failure and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. This comprised strategies for high-quality, effective and efficient palliative care delivery that alleviates physical and psychological symptoms. Particular emphasis was given to the timing of the intervention as well as the team that delivers the care.

The consortium also proposed clinical guidelines for integrating palliative care across Europe. To enhance societal visibility and dissemination, INSUP-C partners developed an online e-learning resource and published a book for healthcare professionals and caregivers.

Considering the millions of individuals worldwide in need of palliative care and the lack of existing guidelines, it is of paramount importance to build infrastructure and integrate resources for patients with chronic diseases. Overall, project results contribute towards this and pave the way for implementation of the WHO resolution on palliative care.

**Keywords**

Palliative care, quality of life, life-threatening illnesses, INSUP-C, cancer, chronic disease

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**Project Information**

**INSUP-C**

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