

Cancer Patient Support Society "Dzīvības Koks" in cooperation with
Pulmonary Hypertension Society and Patient Ombudsman

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
“CHRONIC DISEASES POSE A CHALLENGE TO 21st CENTURY EUROPE:
PATIENT’S PERSPECTIVE AND ECONOMIC ACTIVITY”

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The conference is organized within the framework of
Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union

Resolution

Involvement of chronic disease patients in health care processes, and quality of treatment and care and their reintegration active economic and social life

Prepared by the Latvian Cancer Patient Support Society "Dzīvības Koks," Pulmonary Hypertension Society and the Latvian Patient Ombudsman.

Signatories: European Society of Hypertension, Latvian Professional Associations of Rehabilitation, Latvian Health Economics Association, Ukrainian Society for Neurorehabilitation, European Cancer Patient Coalition, Latvian Alliance for Rare Diseases, RCTV Memoria IRCT (Moldova), Psychosocial Oncology Association in Lithuania, Italian Active Citizenship Network, PHA Europe, Pulmonary Hypertension Society of Lithuania, Europa Donna Estonia, Europa Donna Latvia, Latvian Association of Oncologists.

Topic: Strengthening chronic patients' reintegration in active economic and social life in European countries.

Situation: European Union (EU) citizens live, on average, longer and healthier lives than previous generations. At the same time chronic diseases are the leading cause of morbidity and mortality in Europe. As a result, it has become a burden on health, social as well as economic systems in European countries on both micro and macro level. Chronic diseases decrease labour productivity, reduce wages, earnings and workforce participation, as well as increase early retirement, job turnover and disability. Thereby one of the most important tasks for national governments is to reintegrate chronic disease patients in a full-fledged social and economic life, so that they can participate in the workforce as much as possible. According to the "Europe 2020 strategy" the goal is to maintain 75% of the working-age population employed and maintain its productivity as high as possible for as long as possible.

Until now, the EU-level documents have highlighted the prevalence of chronic diseases, the role and impact that chronic diseases have on health care systems and treatment processes. Furthermore, another issue expressed in the EU-level documents is the conviction of the need to reintegrate individuals with chronic diseases back into active economic and social life. However, most health care systems today are still structured around acute episode treatment. In addition, too little discussion has been on the facilitation for reintegration of chronically ill patients into social and economic life. The reduction of inequalities with regard to access to high quality healthcare as well as the availability to social services and equality of employment rights and opportunities in the EU should also be promoted.

The resolution has been prepared for the conference "Chronic Diseases pose a challenge to 21st Century Europe: Patients' Perspective and Economic Activity." It is intended for distribution in national governments in the EU, the European Commission, the European Parliament, the EU Economic and Social Committee, the Presidency of the Council of the EU.

In order to facilitate chronic patient reintegration into economic and social life, this resolution puts and emphasis not so much on the prevention and healthy lifestyle choices, as the quality of treatment and high quality after-treatment process.

I Healthcare activities that allow for successful patient involvement in the treatment process

- Promote long-term investment as basic in early and adequate treatment of chronic diseases that allows the patient to live and work adequately for national economic development.
- Promote economic approach to treatment of chronic diseases, meaning that investment (in pharmaceuticals, medical technology, etc.) is considered as long-term economic benefit for personal and national prosperity.
- Promote harmonized availability of medical technology and drugs for patients in order to treat specific diseases at the EU level.
- Promote adequate monitoring of all aspects related to chronic diseases, develop national and EU-level statistics on dynamics of chronic diseases and dynamics of particular diagnoses.
- Promote e-health and telemedicine treatment of chronic diseases.
- Promote corporate social responsibility of companies at state and the EU level.

II Patient rights, work environment and labour law

- Promote social support systems as well as work environment and legal framework for specific chronic diseases in each of the EU member states.
- Draw attention to patient rights' constraints and labour rights' violations, restricting the spread of this malpractice especially for people with chronic diseases.
- Promote customization of the work environment for chronic patient capabilities – individual protection, working hours (opportunity to visit doctor, medical treatment etc. to maintain or improve health condition and capacity), adjust responsibilities for employees capacity.
- Promote public and work places awareness of the prevalence of chronic diseases – about treatment, special needs, symptoms, protective measures if needed for infectious conditions.
- Promote and provide research on chronic disease prevalence, nature and quality of life of chronic disease patients in the EU, and EU countries in particular.
- Promoting healthy work environment – working hours, breaks, decrease smoking (as well passive) at work places, lower stress level and pressure from colleagues and employers.

III Rehabilitation services: vision, experience, legislation and finance

- Promote treatment as a multidisciplinary process that needs an integrated approach from the moment of diagnosis of chronic diseases, which includes medical treatment, psychological support, rehabilitation and social support - all based on biopsychosocial approach.
- Promote rehabilitation (medical, physical and psychosocial) as a support system to the chronic patient, from the moment of diagnosis up until the moment of return to an adequate quality of life.
- Promote reintegration into economic and social life as an important goal for chronic patients' rehabilitation with a strong emphasis on individual abilities by means of creating motivating and supporting conditions for chronic disease patients.

- Promote rehabilitative system that will embody continuity, integrity of services and adequate resources as well as different options for rehabilitation settings, following to recommendations of WHO service matrix.
- Promote rehabilitative system that meets the chronic patients' needs based on Strengthening Rehabilitation as the priority over disability legislation (Law on Rehabilitation).

IV Comprehensive support for people with rare diseases

- Raise awareness of the specificity complexity of rare diseases, as well as to promote public awareness of rare diseases and rare diseases patients' integration into social and economic life, decreasing social exclusion.
- Improve access to early diagnostics, qualitative health care and treatment for people with rare diseases, regardless of the country where they live, regardless of age, gender, nationality, any discriminative and others obstacles.
- Facilitate access to the most clinically effective treatment available.
- Facilitate comprehensive services directly to patients home to reduce burden of disease for patients and their careers.
- Ensure availability of psychosocial support for rare diseases patients and their caregivers in all period of disease episode.
- Provide support for active social life (work from home, distance work, part time work, handicapped parking places).
- Develop financial support system for patients' non-governmental organisations that ensures their independence.

V Cancer as a chronic disease

- Increase awareness among the general public, policy makers, survivors and others about cancer survivorship and its impact.
- Promote policy changes that support addressing cancer as a long-term, chronic disease.
- Ensure that all cancer survivors have adequate access to high-quality treatment and psycho-social rehabilitation and other post-treatment follow-up services, regardless of the country in which the patient has contracted the illness.
- Raise awareness of the psychosomatic nature of cancer, provide psychological support for patients and their relatives after the diagnosis as well as after the acute treatment process.
- Identify appropriate mechanisms and resources for ongoing surveillance of people living with cancer.
- Eliminate the existing inequalities in health care and social support systems within the EU.
- Promote research on oncological diseases, such as research on the impact that chronic diseases have on patients' quality of life.
- Achieve incorporation of fighting cancer stigma in the National Cancer Control Plan.
- Assess and enhance provision of palliative services to cancer survivors.

With this resolution we invite to pay attention to different aspects of chronic diseases and to look at such

diseases not only from the aspect of acute treatment process, but also to draw attention to the process that comes after the acute treatment. This will help to ensure patients' quality of life, and their reintegration into active social and economic life.

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