

## Introduction

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Oncology is and will remain an important health care issue. At the end of the 20th century, there were around 11 million new cancer cases, 7 million deaths due to cancer, and 25 million persons alive with cancer worldwide. Due to the demographic changes in the population and risk factors, it is estimated that by the year 2010 these figures will double.

There are large differences in cancer incidence and survival *between* and *within* European countries for most adult and childhood cancers. These differences reflect different risk factors but also different accessibility to preventive and treatment facilities. Despite these differences, there is a decrease in cancer mortality in many European countries, reflecting successful anti-cancer programmes.

Each country should invest in a cancer control programme (prevention, early detection and screening, diagnosis, treatment and palliative care) in order to control the cancer burden among its citizens.

Oncology treatment is evolving to a multidisciplinary discipline with participation of different physicians (organ specialists, pathologists, radiologists, nuclear physicians, surgeons, radiotherapists and medical oncologists) but also other health care professionals (e.g. pharmacists, nurses, physiotherapists, psychologists, dieticians). Before cancer treatment is started a multidisciplinary consultation should determine the most optimal treatment approach for each patient. This treatment approach should be based on data generated by evidence-based medicine and by consensus meetings. However, it will also depend on the national health care system, and the availability of treatment, although it is part of our task to work at ensuring that, at least, a minimum standard treatment and care is offered to each patient.

Education of all health care professionals but also of the patients and the public is of crucial importance to improve cancer care. The Federation of European Cancer Societies (FECS) is therefore proposing an educational programme for health care professionals, which covers some of the important topics in cancer care.

The multidisciplinary approach of breast, lung, colorectal and prostate cancer is included in the educational programme and international renowned experts will present standard of care and treatment. Attention has been, also, paid to some important issues affecting the quality of life of cancer patients such as pain and gastrointestinal obstructions. In addition to the lectures, there will be an educational book that can be used to review, check and possibly adapt local guidelines for cancer treatment and care.

I would like to thank my colleagues of the Education and Training Committee of FECS, the members of the ECCO 13 Scientific Committee, the chairpersons of the different sessions and the lecturers for their time and help to make this educational programme a success.

I hope that you will enjoy the conference.

Dr Dirk Schrijvers  
*Scientific Editor*