EUGMS European Union Geriatric Medicine Society Fostering geriatric medicine across Europe

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Better Palliative Care for Older People

European populations are ageing: 80% of citizens are dying over the age of 70 years. Increasing numbers of people are living with frailty and disability, and dying with multiple chronic diseases. Appropriate and effective management of symptoms (pain, breathlessness, fatigue, depression and other distressing problems) is often lacking; this results in poor quality of life and loss of dignity. Too frequently, older people undergo unnecessary examinations, treatments, hospitalizations and admissions to intensive care. This is burdensome and expensive for the patient, family and society. Access to high quality palliative care for older people, and closer interaction between geriatric and palliative multidisciplinary teams, would better meet people's needs and save health and social care costs.

WE CALL UPON EUROPEAN GOVERNMENTS AND EU INSTITUTIONS TO ENSURE THAT EVERY OLDER CITIZEN WITH CHRONIC DISEASES, ESPECIALLY AT AN ADVANCED STAGE, IS OFFERED THE BEST POSSIBLE PALLIATIVE CARE APPROACH WHEREVER THEY ARE CARED FOR.

This could be achieved by:

1. Recognizing that older people with chronic diseases have the right to the best possible palliative care approach
   EU Institutions should delineate a palliative care strategy that encompasses older people with chronic diseases and this should be included as a top priority of national health care policies.

2. Promoting public awareness
   EU Institutions should empower older people and families, and promote public awareness of palliative care in society.

3. Promoting a collaborative effort between geriatric and palliative medicine
   EU Institutions should facilitate the collaboration between geriatric and palliative medicine to foster synergies, and to design a plan for developing areas of common interest.

4. Investing in education
   EU Institutions should recommend that all clinicians and care workers involved in the care of older people and their families have core competences in palliative care. These competences should be part of under-graduate, post-graduate and continuing education.

5. Investing in research
   EU institutions should increase the opportunities for, and the funding of, research in palliative care. Public and consumer involvement should be promoted and the implementation of research findings into practice must be a core outcome.

6. Establishing an EU platform for the exchange, comparison and benchmarking of best practices between member states.

This statement is drawn from the joint EAPC-EUGMS booklet 'Palliative care for older people: better practices"