

EAPC TASK FORCE ON VOLUNTEERING WEBINAR 9 November 2021

Responses to webinar questions

Thank you for taking time to submit questions in advance of the webinar. The answers are listed below for those that it was possible to answer. Some questions were answered during the webinar and the recording is available on the Task Force webpage if you would like to hear the information again: [Volunteering – European Association for Palliative Care, EAPC \(eapcnet.eu\)](https://eapcnet.eu)
The Story Project books are also available to read/download from this page.

- **Muslim volunteers in hospice care and their relationship to the eapc are there some informations?** We have no specific information on this topic.
In France we accept any volunteer with any religion but as our job must not show any sign of religion, the volunteers can't wear any sign specific, no crosses, no muslim veil.
- **What are some lessons learned about how to successfully integrate volunteer networks into more formal health care systems?** The Task Force has not explored this. Anecdotal evidence suggests that there needs to be clarity about the role of volunteers, why are they needed, what roles will they undertake, training staff to understand the role of volunteers and work effectively with them and training for volunteers in understanding their role within the organisation. Effective support for both volunteers and staff working with volunteers.
Dr Steven Vanderstichelen's work may be of interest here:
<https://spcare.bmj.com/content/10/3/e28.abstract>
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/hsc.12905>
- **Koliko ce biti još edukacija. How much more education will there be?**
- **To be a volunteer you have to work in a certain field. Are you trained / advised in what you are going to do? Thank you very much** Most organisations provide some training to volunteers on their role. Some are also offered support from experiences volunteers or members of staff. A small number of countries have national Curricula for training volunteers.
- **Overall what was the biggest challenge?** With regard to Covid-19 and volunteering, the safe deployment of volunteers in order to protect patients, families, staff and volunteers.
- **How will the learnings from COVID-19 inform palliative care volunteering for the future beyond COVID??** Answered during the webinar.
- **Have there been any findings that surprise you in terms of country responses?** Answered during the webinar.
- **which emotions of volunteer?** The online volunteer story books have a lot of information about this. The pdf versions of the books are now on the Volunteering Task Force webpage: [Volunteering – European Association for Palliative Care, EAPC \(eapcnet.eu\)](https://eapcnet.eu)
- **Danke für die Möglichkeit, teilnehmen zu dürfen! Thank you for the opportunity to participate.**
- **What are the most obstacles as a PC volunteer?** The online volunteer story books have information on volunteer experiences. The pdf versions of the books are now on the Volunteering Task Force webpage: [Volunteering – European Association for Palliative Care, EAPC \(eapcnet.eu\)](https://eapcnet.eu)

- **Hospice volunteer management know-how in the face of COVID-19.** Covered by the presentation.

- **What are the care needs you have seen in the people you have cared for.** Volunteers' responses:

In my opinion, they need somebody to dedicate time at their side, to listen what they want to express, they want to feel how important they still are even with their condition. Catherine R., France

Palliative care volunteers stand alongside the sick person and the family/caregivers, giving life to the time left to live. They do so through active and empathic listening, often assuming the role of the moderator in the communication among the patient/family/care team, aimed at reducing conflicts and restoring serenity. Then there also are volunteers who organize activities with the patients: hand-made jobs, crosswords, knitting, and much more.

The needs we responded to must be necessarily distinguished: pre-Covid-19 and during the pandemic.

Patients' need for listening, closeness, human touch, effective communication and enhancement of the time is common to both moments.

This even if in the last 21 months the volunteers' physical presence has not been possible, except in particular contexts. Unfortunately, the use of PPE has dramatically often dampened the value of the "being there" relationship itself. During the pandemic, patients felt fear of dying alone, and familiars experienced together with them the spiritual and social isolation and a lack of hope: volunteers were then present via telephone, video chat, and Zoom meetings. Chiara, Italy

Has there been scope for volunteers supporting patients at point of diagnosis? The Task Force has not explored this specifically but the question has been asked before and some clinicians believe that there is a role for volunteers to support patients at the point of diagnosis and for some time beyond as they adapt to this new situation. Macmillan Cancer Support in the UK have some volunteers roles that may be similar to this.

That would be a great progress to have volunteers for that very particular time. In France some nurses are trained for that but a non-professional with a bit of time and empathy could be very helpful. Thank you for raising this idea. Catherine R., France

- **What topics are the volunteers coursed in when they want to become palliation volunteers? And Length of time and difficulty?** These vary from organisation to organisation and country to country.
- **Changes in the volunteers motivation** Research suggests that volunteer motivation changes over time. Some volunteers become more involved in the service, whilst others decide to leave after they feel they have given enough. It is not clear how Covid-19 affected volunteer motivation, although the Covid-19 Volunteer study suggested that some older volunteers paused or stopped volunteering as they were concerned about catching Covid-19.
- **What are the functions of a volunteer in a polyativ, which is intended for this, what is the motivation for volunteering in this.** This paper may help to answer the functions of a volunteer. Goossensen A, Somsen J, Scott R, Pelttari L. (2016) EAPC White paper on the role, position, identity and value of volunteering in hospice and palliative care in Europe European Journal of Palliative Care: 23(4). https://www.hospiz.at/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/EJPC_23_4_White_Paper.pdf

- **Waiting to learn more of the topic and the book!** The pdf versions of the books are now on the Volunteering Task Force webpage: [Volunteering – European Association for Palliative Care, EAPC \(eapcnet.eu\)](https://www.eapcnet.eu)
- **Has any of your experience involved 'volunteering' in care homes? If so, how does this differ from hospices?** The Task Force has not specifically explored volunteering in care homes and so has no evidence on this topic. Some volunteers from palliative care services in Europe are based in care homes. NCVO in the UK has undertaken some research on volunteering in care homes: <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/about-us/media-centre/press-releases/1323-volunteers-in-care-homes-create-profound-positive-impact-for-residents-new-research>
In France PC volunteers visit patients in care home as well. However we tend to be very specific to be sent to patient with a terminal condition as to not be used for occupational tasks.

In Italy, some organizations have volunteers working in care homes for elderly people where the basic activities are the same as those offered in hospitals. Longer time and bigger spaces of care homes represent a benefit that makes the difference in terms of variety. Diversionary activities here may include pet therapy too.
- **To be able to compare the results: Are there differences in the financing of volunteers between the countries examined?** This has not been specifically studied but anecdotal evidence suggests that volunteers are funded differently in different organisations and countries.
- **Hoe de veiligheid bewaken voor vrijwilligers en patiënten inzake covid. Wat met vrijwilligers die zich niet laten vaccineren? • How to monitor safety for volunteers and patients regarding covid. What about volunteers who do not get vaccinated?** Evidence from a small number of respondents from the Covid -19 study suggests that volunteers need to be vaccinated before they can return. There was little evidence about non vaccinated volunteers.
- **Are there differences between the extent to which volunteers are retained during the pandemic depending on the clinical context?** Answered during the webinar.
- **Toolkits and Evidence Based Practices for caring.** The Task Force has not explored this.
- **What are the best ways of elevating the patient's socio-emotional wellbeing while in palliative care?**
Palliative care usually offers the humanization of treatments together with volunteers and a multidisciplinary care team. Specific professionals promote diversionary activities such as music therapy, art therapy, caviardage and poetry therapy to elevate the patient's socio-emotional wellbeing. Chiara, Italy.

To what extent did the Covid context influence your willingness to work and your work satisfaction? Covid changed my perception of my will to be useful, I don't want to spend so much time on administrative tasks but more directly with the people who really need my help, like my community, my friends, . I am following a Doula training right now to become an End of life Doula. Catherine R., France.

- **What are some of the strategies that might be helpful to target volunteers in the future?** Anecdotal evidence from recent discussions suggest that volunteer involving organisations need to be more open in their expectations – asking volunteers what they can contribute rather than making volunteers fit long standing activities. Flexible roles, projects to enable short term involvement, volunteering roles that are attractive to younger volunteers. Support for volunteers wishing to return after lack of involvement during the pandemic.
- **Are volunteers back at work in EU?** In some countries volunteers are back but it is not the same in all countries in the EU.
- **Are there any numbers about reduction of volunteering hours due to Covid-19?** Answered during the webinar
- **What is the future for this Task Force?** Two current members of the Task Force are planning to apply to EAPC to Chair and start a new Task Force. A number of current Steering Group members are keen to be part of this.
- **Soll/muss sich die Ausbildung ehrenamtlicher Hospizbegleiter*innen durch COVID-19 verändern? Should / must the training of volunteer hospice attendants change due to COVID-19?** The Covid-19 study suggests that some respondents have provided training in infection control and safe working during Covid-19. If volunteers will be required to undertake new roles or changed ways of working it would seem important to provide training to support this.
- **Va gândiți să implementați și în România?** Are you thinking of implementing in Romania as well? The Task Force has had previous involvement with and contributions from colleagues in Romania from Hospice Casa Speranți.
- **What are the implications the increasing of needs for palliative care e.g longevity, NCDs etc on volunteering?** Findings on the essential nature of volunteering would suggest that as demand for palliative care increases, so may the demand for volunteers. This might also need volunteers to work in new and different ways.
- **Helping others makes me feel good. At times I feel guilt over enjoying life on the patients expense. That seems wrong?** Many volunteers describe the rewarding nature of volunteering and that they find the work fulfilling. It is important that volunteers find their activities rewarding so that they are motivated to continue.
- **How does EAPC (Associazione Europea di Cure Palliative) intend to make itself heard by National European Governments in the face of growing numbers of people in real need of palliative care, considering the insufficient response due to rather limited resources put at their disposal? Thank you for your kind attention!** The EAPC work hard to advocate for palliative care. Please see the EAPC website for information on all that they do.
<https://www.eapcnet.eu/about-us/what-we-do/>