

ACCESSIBLE CANCER MEDICINES FOR ALL PATIENTS

CONTEXT

Both medical and technological developments have led to the increased provision of cancer medicines on the market. These improved and advanced treatments make it possible for cancer patients to survive or live longer with a better quality of life. Unfortunately, the number of people diagnosed with cancer is rising every year. The combination of increased cancer incidence in the population and new technologically advanced cancer medicines results in a situation where the total cost of cancer is rising which puts an unprecedented demand on healthcare budgets and/or makes treatment unaffordable for many cancer patients. There is a growing risk that affordability or pricing of the medication will become a deciding factor in a patient's cancer treatment in the hospital or in the doctor's office. This leads to instability and unpredictability; which is particularly undesirable to a patient who has received a cancer diagnosis. A political and social discussion must be held and as a result policy must be developed in order to ensure equal and affordable access to cancer medicines. Patients must be able to rely on receiving the best possible treatment to match their medical needs and optimise their potential for beating their disease.

CALL FOR ACTION

New cancer medicines offer new perspectives for patients with diseases that could hardly be treated or cured in the past. However, with these advanced cancer medicines come dilemmas concerning the extremely high cost and a rising number of cancer patients. Measures that are currently taken to guarantee the accessibility of new medicines and to limit their cost are no longer sufficient.

The sustainability of health care systems is also at stake. In our opinion it is important to tackle the problem of rising (and high) prices for new cancer medicines with members of the pharmaceutical industry. Their 'contract with society' has to be redefined. Decisions related to pricing and reimbursement of cancer medicines are primarily the responsibility of national governments and third parties. Since the problem of access and affordability exists in many parts of Europe and beyond, it is necessary to join forces on an international level, exchange information and best practices and look for possible common solutions.

To assure the accessibility of innovative cancer medicines for all cancer patients, the countries of this task force have decided to join forces. This task force that will actively address the problems that threaten the accessibility of cancer medicines in an international setting, starting in Europe. We will work towards the following goals:

OUR GOALS

Our ultimate goal is to achieve equal access to medicines for all cancer patients in Europe.

Goal 1: The cancer societies of this task force state that all effective and innovative cancer treatments now and in the future should be accessible to patients. Patients cannot suffer from a dysfunctional system and/or unsustainable financial and pricing arrangements in the prescription of medicines.

Goal 2: Medicine prices should be sustainable and proportionate to real cost of research and development and added therapeutic value. In that respect an open, transparent and continuous dialogue with the pharmaceutical industry is needed. Knowledge and information must be shared internationally and co-operation must be sought after.

Goal 3: Cancer medicines that have a distinctive therapeutic added value should reach patients in a timely manner, in the safest way and at affordable prices. The patients should be fully informed of the possible benefits and harms.

Goal 4: Cancer societies in Europe should work together to get and keep this issue on the national and European agendas of politicians, policy makers and the pharmaceutical industry

Goal 5: Patients should at all times be involved in the decision-making process (eg. joint decision making concerning policies as well as treatment process).

Signatories to this declaration:

