

Concluding remarks

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This 2nd edition of BeCON OWN (Onco-pain empOwerment Network) had a novel interactive format that included both traditional lectures accompanied by interactive sessions. The theme of the *Patient journey: the significance of communication* provided the opportunity for experts and specialists alike to have more awareness of the vital importance of achieving greater communication with patients, and to be aware of not only their needs, but also highlighted that there is often inadequate communication between healthcare professionals as well. The diverse pan-European audience also gave the possibility to explore and learn from differences in communication skills and perceptions at the country, and how these could be improved upon.

Communicating with patients, communicating among ourselves, and communicating science were discussed. In communicating with patients, narrative medicine can be a powerful tool that empowers the caregiver with greater empathy. The current deficits in communicating with patients highlight the need to adopt new skills. Indeed, communication skills should be considered as a core clinical skill and can be taught by a number of methods. While many medical schools in European countries include communication skills training as part

of their teaching curriculum, by no means can the current efforts be considered adequate. Greater education during medical education should be highly encouraged so that it becomes a routine part of medical training for all physicians and healthcare providers. Furthermore, understanding the impact that improved communication skills have on a patient and families can unquestionably help benefit both patient and clinician satisfaction with treatment. While important in all areas of medicine, this is especially important in oncology.

In this regard, extensive time was devoted to the role of palliative care. There was general agreement that it should be offered as early as possible. Moreover, while clear, unequivocal terminology is not always used, the most important aspects in patient care should be kept in mind so that any needed therapeutic and supportive care is offered to the patient and the family. Lastly, greater consideration is needed when treating breakthrough cancer pain on a daily basis. Patients should be properly assessed and managed accordingly using the available guidance. It should be remembered that patients do not always communicate their pain for a wide number of reasons. However, it has significant negative impact on their quality of life and daily functioning. It, therefore, warrants adequate treatment, which is especially relevant given that effective medication is available.

All healthcare providers should aim to improve communication with patients and among ourselves at all stages of the patient journey, starting from diagnosis. The BeCON OWN event has definitely helped in creating greater awareness of current deficits in communication skills, while providing practical and easy to implement solutions from which all can benefit. The need for greater formal education for both patients and all healthcare providers cannot be overemphasized.

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