



Press release - For immediate release

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## Experts urge immediate action to make nutritional care mandatory in cancer care: New evidence supports need for greater emphasis on preventing weight and muscle loss following cancer diagnosis.

Today at a joint policy seminar, renowned European experts from ESPEN, ECPC, ECO and EFAD stressed the vital importance of nutrition for treatment and quality of life of patients with cancer. They called upon stakeholders to join forces to implement optimal nutritional care for all cancer patients and throughout their cancer journey, launching 7 actionable recommendations.

A poor nutritional status can worsen treatment outcomes, cause patients to suffer avoidable complications and reduce their quality of life. It is estimated that the deaths of 10-20% of cancer patients can be attributed to malnutrition rather than to the malignancy itself. Yet, in studies, only 30%-60% of patients found to be at risk of malnutrition received nutritional support. The cost of malnutrition in cancer care in the EU amount to €17B per year.

During the seminar, experts addressed barriers and proposed solutions to the delivery of optimal nutritional care for all throughout the cancer journey.

ESPEN representative Alessandro Laviano, Associate Professor of Internal Medicine in Rome, showed that early nutrition support can enhance the efficacy of anti-cancer treatments and improve outcomes, including survival and quality of life. Highlighting the natural tendency for oncologists to focus on treating the disease rather than the patient with the disease, Professor Laviano presented a compelling case for making nutritional care a standard component of cancer care, with screening for nutritional changes at every hospital visit to allow prompt intervention at the first sign of problems. "Nutritional care is a vital 'supportive' treatment for cancer, which ensures that patients are in the best possible condition to benefit from advances in oncology treatments'.

Nicole Erickson, member of the EFAD oncology expert advisory board, highlighted the fact that many patients with serious nutritional problems do not have access to dietetic advice: 'and therefore multidisciplinary teams should include a specialised oncology dietitian'.

Matti Aapro, president of the European Cancer Organisation, demonstrated that while science is clear about the importance of nutrition for patients with cancer, it is pivotal to convince oncologists and collaboratively address decision-makers.

'The right to high-quality cancer care must include optimal nutritional care', said Ken Mastris, President of the European Cancer Patient's Coalition, 'whereas at present, many patients across Europe cannot get access to the care or the nutritional support they need due to underfunding of dietetic services, or lack of reimbursement of vital nutritional care. The issues of access must be addressed urgently and aligned with policy commitments for equitable, high-quality cancer care'.

At the seminar, a joint Call to Action with 7 actionable recommendations was launched, designed to ensure the protection of the nutritional status of patients with cancer across Europe. The recommendations can be used as a template for local activities and are available for download at [www.european-nutrition.org/recommendations](http://www.european-nutrition.org/recommendations).

ENDS

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## Notes to editors:

### **ESPEN**

ESPEN is the European Society for Clinical Nutrition and Metabolism. The aims of ESPEN are to encourage the rapid diffusion of knowledge and its application in the field of Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition or, more broadly, Clinical Nutrition and Metabolism. It promotes experimental and clinical research, fosters high ethical standards of practice and investigation, and promotes contact between investigators and clinicians in related fields.

[www.espen.org](http://www.espen.org)

### **ENHA**

The European Nutrition for Health Alliance (ENHA) is a charity established to promote and implement nutritional risk screening and improve nutritional care for all European citizens. [www.european-nutrition.org/enha](http://www.european-nutrition.org/enha)

### **ONCA**

Launched in 2014, the Optimal Nutritional Care for All (ONCA) campaign is a multi-stakeholder initiative to facilitate greater screening for risk of disease-related malnutrition/undernutrition and nutritional care implementation across Europe. The campaign supports national professional societies, associations and patient groups in public health and health care to implement nutritional risk screening and optimal nutritional care in their country. [www.european-nutrition.org](http://www.european-nutrition.org)

### **MNI**

MNI - The Medical Nutrition International Industry (MNI) is the voice of the medical nutrition industry at international level. MNI gathers companies that offer specialised nutritional solutions and services designed to meet the diverse nutritional needs of patients. MNI is dedicated to advancing better care through better nutrition, across all ages and healthcare settings. [www.medicalnutritionindustry.com](http://www.medicalnutritionindustry.com)

### **ECPC**

With over 400 members, the ECPC is the largest European cancer patients' association. Covering all 28 Member States, and many other European and non-European countries, the ECPC represents those affected by all types of cancers, from the rarest to the most common. [www.ecpc.org](http://www.ecpc.org)

### **EFAD**

The European Federation of the Associations of Dietitians (EFAD) was established in 1978. The aims of EFAD are to:

- Promote the development of the dietetic profession
- Develop dietetics on a scientific and professional level in the common interest of the member associations
- Facilitate communication between national dietetic associations and other organisations – professional, educational, and governmental
- Encourage a better nutrition situation for the population of the member countries of Europe

[www.efad.org](http://www.efad.org)

### **ECO**

The European Cancer Organisation aims to reduce the burden of cancer, improve outcomes and the quality of care for cancer patients, through multidisciplinary and multiprofessionalism. As the not-for-profit federation of member organisations working in cancer at a European level, the European Cancer Organisation convenes oncology professionals and patients to agree policy, advocate for positive change and speak up for the European cancer community. [www.european-cancer.org](http://www.european-cancer.org)