



European Society for Medical Oncology

## **The international collaborative project to evaluate the availability and accessibility of opioids for the management of cancer pain in Africa, Asia, Latin America & the Caribbean, and the Middle East**

This project is the follow-up of a first survey carried out in the European Region as a collaboration between the European Society for Medical Oncology (ESMO) and the European Association of Palliative Care (EAPC), which was published in the [March 2010 edition of Annals of Oncology](#).

### **Project Owner**

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### **Project Leader**

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### **Project Background**

The under-treatment of cancer pain has been identified as a major international public health crisis. This is particularly so in many of the developing economies of the world and in many parts of the under-developed world. Despite efforts by many international organizations to address this problem, and some limited successes in isolated countries, in the big picture relatively little headway has been made.

Public health initiatives to address this problem are required but on a global and local scale. To be effective, public health initiatives must have valid and reliable data as to the factors contributing to this health care dilemma. To date, collection of this data has been sporadic and not systematic. The lack of specific information may be one of the factors that have hampered progress until now.

All of the partners in this international collaborative project understand the value of this study as the only International one producing meaningful data of this kind. The data will have major health implications for cancer patients around the world who urgently seek relief from cancer pain.

The partners see themselves as having an international mission and commitment to improving the fate of cancer patients unnecessarily suffering from excruciating pain.. Many partner organizations have a proven track record of data collection from the diverse geographic locations, data verification and collation, and report presentation. The partner organizations have experience in teaming with other collaborative partners in similar projects.

This is the largest international collaborative effort led by ESMO in any field and underscores the Society's commitment to supportive and palliative care on a global level as one of its major interests in an international setting. ESMO sees this as a project of major international significance that will both garner necessary data and mobilize a wide range of important collaborative partners to help address the issue of identifying and rectifying barriers to the availability of medication for the management of cancer pain, particularly in the developing world.

### **Project goals**

The goal of this high profile project is to obtain reliable data regarding the availability and barriers to accessibility of opioids to cancer patients in Africa, Asia, Latin America & the Caribbean, and the Middle East. A survey questionnaire benchmarked current standards against international standards set by WHO/International Narcotics Board, which implement and control UN drug conventions. The survey results provide a critical resource for local, regional and international bodies addressing this vital human rights and public health issue of a person's right to effective pain management.

It is hoped that the clear elucidation of barriers to accessibility will facilitate effective lobbying and policy

development to address the necessary regulatory reform required to improve the availability and accessibility of opioids for the management of severe cancer pain.

### **Aims & objectives**

1. To evaluate the formal availability and cost to the consumer of the range of opioid drugs used in the management of cancer
2. To evaluate the regulatory barriers to the accessibility of opioid drugs for patients with cancer pain in each participating country

### **Results, outcomes**

The survey results will be submitted first to Annals of Oncology for publication. Presentations about the survey include the [ESMO 2012 Congress](#) and the EAPC Congress 2013. All partners have been invited to peer review individual country reports, which they are encouraged to present at international, regional and national meetings and to publish in local scientific journals.

The publication in Annals of Oncology, the regional and individual country reports, and the sessions at various Congresses, and letters of recommendations to Ministries of Health based on the survey results, are the main deliverables in this project.

### **International Collaborative Project Partners**

Below is the list of the international collaborative project partners whose invaluable contribution made this survey on the availability and accessibility of opioids for cancer pain management in Africa, Asia, Latin America & the Caribbean, and the Middle East a great success.

#### **Coordinating partners**

1. [European Society for Medical Oncology](#) (ESMO)
2. [European Association of Palliative Care](#) (EAPC)
3. [International Program at the Pain and Policies Studies Group](#) (PPSG), University of Wisconsin Carbone Cancer Center, a WHO Collaborating Center
4. [Union for International Cancer Control](#) (UICC)
5. [World Health Organization](#) (WHO)

#### **Collaborating partners**

1. [African Organization for Research and Training in Cancer](#) (AORTIC)
2. [African Palliative Care Association](#) (APCA)
3. [Asia Pacific Hospice Palliative Care Network](#)
4. [Chinese Society of Clinical Oncology](#) (CSCO)
5. [Foundation Akbaraly, Madagascar](#)
6. [Help the Hospices](#)
7. [Indian Association of Palliative Care](#) (IAPC)
8. [International Association of Hospice and Palliative Care](#) (IAHPC)
9. [Japanese Society of Medical Oncology](#) (JSMO)
10. [Latin American and Caribbean Society of Medical Oncology](#) (SLACOM)
11. [Latin American Association for Palliative Care](#) (ALCP)
12. [Malaysian Oncology Society](#)
13. [Middle East Cancer Consortium](#) (MECC)
14. [Multinational Association for Supportive Care in Cancer](#) (MASCC)
15. Myanmar Oncology Society (MOS)
16. [Open Society Foundation](#) (OSF)
17. [World Palliative Care Alliance](#) (WPCA)