

RE: EUROPEAN CHRONIC DISEASE PROFESSIONAL AND PATIENT ORGANISATIONS CALL FOR SUPPORT ON ACTION TO TACKLE CHRONIC DISEASES IN THE UN NON-COMMUNICABLE DECLARATION

Rome, 11/07/2011

Dear President Barroso,

We are writing to you, on behalf of European chronic disease patients and previous survivors, and their friends and family, to urge you to ensure that Europe plays a leading role in developing a fair strategy at the UN Summit on Non-Communicable Diseases in September 2011.

We work with and represent patients and patient groups working with a range of chronic diseases, including cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, diabetes, and cancer. Chronic non-communicable diseases now affect more than a third of European citizens – over 100 million people – and account for 86% of deaths in the WHO European region. Cardiovascular and respiratory diseases and cancer are the leading causes of death in the EU. Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease affects 30 million people in Europe today. There are approximately 3.4 million new cancer cases diagnosed each year in the EU, while it is estimated that by 2025 29 million people in Europe will be affected by diabetes. Additionally, 10% of the EU population is affected by kidney diseases.

Patients cannot simply be defined by their disease – there is a great deal of diversity within patient communities, requiring a range of approaches. From the youngest to the oldest patients, the disease will be treated differently. Each disease has different sub-types, some of which are as yet little understood. A ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach discriminates against minority groups, such as patients with Type 3 diabetes or a rare disease, for example male breast cancer.

A chronic disease always has a significant impact on every patient’s personal and professional life, their family relationships and other parts of their life, and age, religion, culture and ethnicity impacts on how best to offer patients and families psychosocial support. This is not an add-on but a key part to treatment, as the wellbeing and support a patient enjoys has a direct impact on their quality of life and their responsiveness to treatment. Early and consistent palliative care has been shown to increase life expectancy in cancer patients.

With any chronic disease, a better understanding of its onset and treatment can lead to better prevention and treatment – more cost-effective, offering a better quality of life or a cure. Recent studies in the UK have shown that the onset of Type 2 diabetes, for example, can be reversed. Investment in research is crucial to all chronic disease communities.

In all cases, the goal of treatment is to restore or maintain a productive life to every patient, enabling them to fully integrate into society and to develop themselves professionally. Reducing the burden of chronic diseases is key to minimising the labour force imbalance which Europe will face. Investing in prevention, treatment and research will put Europe in a stronger position.

We strongly urge you to support a strategy for tackling chronic diseases which:

- is adaptable and flexible, meeting the specific needs of the wide range of patients
- balances prevention measures with the needs of current patients
- ensures that prevention, diagnosis and treatment in the future is more effective
- takes into account the impact of living with a chronic disease on patients’ personal and professional lives

- supports patients in living long and productive lives with or after chronic disease

Yours sincerely,

Francesco de Lorenzo, FAVO, Italy

David Kerr, European Society of Medical Oncology

Michael Baumann, European Cancer Organisation, ECCO

Tom Hudson, European Cancer Patient Coalition

Sophie Peresson, The International Diabetes Federation (IDF)

Susanne Logstrup, European Heart Network

Florence Bernardon, European Kidney Health Alliance

Per Anders Abrahamsson, European Association of Urology

Anita Waldman, Myeloma Euronet

Louis Denis, Europa Uomo

Jana Pelouchová, CML Advocates Network

Jola Gore-Booth, Europacolon

Mark Thursz, European Association for the Study of the Liver

Sandra Elisabeth Roelofs, European Cervical Cancer Association

Breda Flood, EFA European Federation of Allergy and Airways Diseases Patients' Associations

Pippa Powell, European Lung Foundation

Anne-Marie Felton, Foundation of European Nurses in Diabetes

