

EARLY INTEGRATED PALLIATIVE CARE for older non-cancer patients POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS



*“We deserve to live in dignity whatever our age, until we die, including during the last years of our lives” **

Only 19.2% of older people consulted are aware of the palliative care services they could receive*.

What are the gaps ?

Adequate palliative care in Europe **is not always accessible or affordable**, especially for older palliative care patients (for instance, due to ageism) suffering from complex chronic diseases other than cancer. **Education and public awareness are lacking behind** and lack of **integrated and person-centred palliative care** increase costs substantially due to **the late identification of palliative care needs**.

Where do we want to go?

Removal of taboo and stigma around palliative care. Dying with dignity would become the norm.

Informing the general public of the possible options and the **benefits of early detection of palliative care needs**, including health and social care professionals, patients and their families.

Implementing a **holistic, integrated and early approach to palliative care**.



Empowerment of older people, health and social care professionals, including informal caregivers, through **clearer information and supporting solutions** (e.g., guidelines or technologies).

Recommendations to get there

Invest in early and broader palliative care education

1

- Raise public awareness through campaigns to reduce the stigma around palliative care and the taboo around death.
- Invest in the education for older people, their relatives and caregivers providing information about symptoms, prognosis and care options earlier and better.
- Invest in continuous training for healthcare professionals, including compassionate skills and older patient-centred family focused care.

- Promote the active participation of patients and informal carers in the decision-making process, establishing personalised future local pathways and plans.
- Provide financial support to informal caregivers (families), as well as bereavement services as a preventive mental health approach.

2

Empower older people and their families

Coordinate and Integrate Care

3

- Boost the development of an organisational system that ensures coordination between health and social care professionals.
- Implement a routine screening for needs, to identify patients who could benefit from early palliative care, moving from an isolated decision-making to a joint and multidisciplinary referral process.

- Develop laws, regulations, guidelines and indicators in line with these recommendations to facilitate palliative care implementation.
- Create mechanisms to assess and regulate qualitatively and quantitatively the provision of palliative care.

4

Set legal provision and indicators

Cost-effectiveness of early identification

5

Early palliative care does not only improve patient outcomes but also reduces health care costs. Member States should implement cost analysis in all settings, recognizing the importance of early palliative care in improving patient outcomes and decentralising costs.

Create an EU Palliative Care Platform aimed at providing clear and accessible research-based information about care provision, to promote the debate, encourage the sharing of best practices and exchanges between crucial actors and networking.

6

Member states should share practices

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