

PRESS RELEASE

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Defending Medical Oncology to Assure Quality Care for Cancer Patients

ESMO releases position paper on the role of medical oncologists in cancer care to ensure patient's access to optimal care

Lugano, Switzerland, 13 December 2013 — Medical oncologists have a vital role to play in cancer care, particularly as treatments become ever more complex, a new position statement [1] from the European Society for Medical Oncology says.

Medical oncologists are specialist cancer physicians trained to provide treatment with drugs, spanning from the old one-fits-all chemotherapy to newer targeted agents or immunotherapies attacking the disease at its core.

ESMO's aim with the position statement, published today in the *Annals of Oncology*, is to guarantee to Europe's growing number of cancer patients access to optimal treatment, says Razvan Popescu, Chair of the ESMO National Representatives and Membership Committee, main sponsor of the paper.

"There are many complex decisions to be made around cancer treatment, and recent scientific advances are making the provision of optimal care even more challenging," said Popescu. "Only medical oncology training prepares physicians to deal with this complexity."

Medical oncology as a specialty has existed since the 1960s. It was formally recognised in the European Union as an independent medical specialty and professional qualification only in March 2011 [2].

The new ESMO position paper takes the speciality a step further, by outlining formally for the first time the role of medical oncologists. Developed in consultation with medical oncologists and professional organisations across Europe, endorsed by all medical oncology societies in Europe, it represents a consensus view of the medical oncologist's place in the treatment of cancer.

“We hope that this position paper will be useful to individual countries in their discussions for the recognition of medical oncology as a specialty where it is not yet recognized and to defend the profession where possible challenges arise,” Popescu said.

The ESMO statement establishes, among others, what the internationally recognised standard of education and training should be for a medical oncologist. “These standards will help ensure that patients receive the best possible care and that professionals achieve qualifications that will be recognised across Europe,” said Popescu.

“By bringing attention to the role of medical oncology, ESMO hopes to improve the treatment of patients across Europe,” said ESMO President Martine Piccart.

“Cancer is a complex disease, and quality cancer care should be provided by multidisciplinary teams of medical professionals, including radiation oncologists and surgeons,” Piccart said.

“Medical oncologists are a core member of such teams, offering a patient-centred holistic approach to quality cancer care that aims to guide and support the patient through the entire ‘cancer journey’,” Piccart said.

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Notes

→ An EMBARGOED PDF of the manuscript can be accessed before publication BY JOURNALISTS ONLY at: http://www.oxfordjournals.org/our_journals/annonc/prpaper.pdf
This link should not be used in stories you publish, thank you.

Advance access to the paper will be available at this link, until 19 December 2013:
<http://annonc.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2013/12/13/annonc.mdt522.full.pdf+html>

→ Video interviews, a map of Europe with endorsing societies and further resources will be available on the ESMO website as of 13 December at:
<http://www.esmo.org/Policy/Position-Statements-Recommendations/2013-Position-Paper/Endorsing-Societies>

[1] Popescu RA, Schäfer R, Califano R et al. The current and future role of the medical oncologist in the professional care for cancer patients: a position paper by the European Society for Medical Oncology (ESMO). *Ann Oncol* 2013; 25: 9-15: <http://annonc.oxfordjournals.org/content/25/1/9.full.pdf+html>

[2] <http://www.esmo.org/Policy/Recognition-and-Status-of-Medical-Oncology>

About the European Society for Medical Oncology

The European Society for Medical Oncology (ESMO) is the leading European professional organization committed to advancing the specialty of medical oncology and promoting a multidisciplinary approach to cancer treatment and care. ESMO’s mission is to advance cancer care and cure through fostering and disseminating good science that leads to better medicine and determines best practice.

ESMO’s scientific journal, *Annals of Oncology*, ranks among the top clinical oncology journals worldwide. ESMO events are the meeting place in Europe for medical oncologists to update their knowledge, to network and to exchange ideas.

To find out more about ESMO, please visit: www.esmo.org