

Cancer treatments: also improving “supportive therapies”

Pubblicato: Lunedì 13 Gennaio 2014

✖ The goal set by the **4 Italian oncologists** who have formed the **Italian Network of Supportive Care in Oncology (NCSO)**, was to alleviate the **symptoms of cancer treatments and to pursue a better quality of life during these treatments.**

This network has already hundreds of members, including oncologists, radiotherapists, haematologists and nurses. “We hope to involve patient associations, as well,” explained **Dr Paolo Bossi, an oncologist at Milan’s Istituto dei Tumori.** “Until now, in Italy, people have worked individually, or at the treatment centre level, as in the case of the Istituto dei Tumori, thanks to Dr Ripamonti. Creating a network will give more weight to the issue, and will help to get funds and carry out research on supportive therapies.”

The topic of supportive therapies is highly developed abroad. There are organisations and science conferences to debate **how to make the patient feel better during cancer treatment**, by preventing or alleviating side effects, such as nausea, hair loss, tingling in the limbs, tiredness, a lack of appetite, canker sores, diarrhoea and pain. “**These symptoms often influence therapies, slowing them down,**” the physician explained. “Thinking of ways to support a patient helps to improve their care and even the efficacy of the therapy itself.”

This network was created as an association independent of any research centre, pharmaceutical company or hospital. “Independence is an extra, because it allows us to work with everybody and to obtain more attention and strength in finding funds. Everybody is interested in sharing our activity, serving the well-being of the patient.”

In Italy, knowledge and research have not made any progress, with respect to France and Germany. Research is being carried out to discover the molecule that will combat the cancer cell most effectively, but little is being done to study the effects of its use or any treatments that might alleviate any unpleasant consequences. “This is why we have sought an international connexion with the **Multinational Association of Supportive Care in Cancer (MASCC)**. Our network is a non-profit association aimed at improving research and the limited training of professionals on these matters, because new treatments are always quickly available in clinical practice.” **Today, there are 3 or 4 centres in Italy that deal with supportive therapies**, including the **Istituto dei Tumori, with the group headed by Carla Ripamonti.** In the first week of May, NCSO will be holding its first national congress in Rome.

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