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The Institute for European Hospice Partnerships: idea, vision, mission, and first steps of its development

Abstract

Against the background of a European research study in the field of palliative care lasting several months and the experiences of a five-year international hospice partnership, the founding idea for an Institute dedicated to the presentation and promotion of bilateral cooperation of specialized services in palliative care emerged. The goals, as well as the vision, mission and tasks of this Institute for European Hospice Partnerships, are described and the significance of a research project important for its development is named.

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Key words: institute, hospice partnerships, WHO-Europe, specialized palliative care, core values

Idea and the overall goal of the Institute

The Academy at the Johannes Hospice in Münster (Germany) is currently developing initial structures for the setting up of an institute to be named: Institute for European Hospice Partnerships. In 2018, its director, in cooperation with the Collaborating Centre of the World Health Organization (WHO) of the Salzburg Paracelsus Medical Private University (PMU), conducted a nearly six-month field study dedicated to the issues of a core curriculum in palliative care (interdisciplinary, postgraduate). The quantitative part was published in 2020 [1], and the qualitative part in 2022 [2]. Not least this journey, which passed through 23 countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe

and Central Asia, and which confirmed an imbalance within the WHO Europe region [3, 4], inspired the idea of such an Institute.

The overall aim of this Institute is to map and promote international bilateral collaborations of specialized palliative care facilities and services (inpatient hospices, hospital palliative care units, home care services: for adults as well as for children and adolescents) in the WHO Europe region, which includes Central Asia. A particular focus is on the countries of Ukraine and Moldova. These partnerships can be formal, through a written agreement, or informal.

Exemplary for the possibility of successful realization of this goal is the cooperation between the Palliative Care Centre in Ivano-Frankivsk (Western Ukraine) and the Johannes Hospice in Münster, which

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has been in place since 2017, with a variety of ambitious projects, such as the establishment of a series of publications on palliative care in Ukrainian, starting with a textbook for nurses and a compendium on teaching methods in 2021 and 2022.

Vision, mission and tasks

The Institute aims to promote international hospice bridges. Within its means, it will contribute to reducing the imbalance in the WHO European Region, especially between East and West. These cooperative partnerships must be based on certain fundamental values. These are:

- respect for each other;
- working together and learning from each other;
- competence instead of deficit: the cooperation sees each other's potential, strengths and experience;
- hierarchy-free and equal communication and encounter;
- civil society engagement.

What is the mission of the Institute, i.e. how is it promoted? Initially, the Institute will provide support primarily in an ideational way. Unlike international conferences, whose participation is often precondition rich (language barrier, often scientific focus, expensive participation fee) and therefore reaches a high percentage especially leaders, the focus should be on those questions and topics, which arise from the concrete work and everyday life level of all relevant professional groups in palliative care. Therefore, it is not about cooperation between universities and professional associations, but about the partnership between palliative services, it is about the level of concrete providers.

What are the Institute's tasks? In summary, they can essentially be named as follows:

- promoting exchange and reciprocal visits, internships, education and research within collaborations in the areas of nursing-medical care, psychosocial and spiritual care, bereavement care, furthermore for volunteering, PR and fundraising;
- to provide insights into the respective health and care systems of the countries in the context of palliative and hospice care, including their national legislation;
- to provide a detailed and constantly updated information platform on existing collaborations and their activities;
- the provision of an information platform for specialized institutions and services in palliative care on collaborations they wish to establish (specifying their needs in the fields mentioned). These needs

can also concern concrete care (e.g. beds, technical equipment), i.e. humanitarian aid on site;

- to support value discourses as well as the promotion of dialogue and understanding in the context of culturally sensitive palliative care.

The Institute provides an important structural-organizational framework for this because it ensures continuity, coordination and systematization, networking and visualization of the activities of bilateral cooperation.

Research as an important step in the development

An important step for the development of the Institute is the collection of data within the framework of a research project, which is being carried out together with dr Leszek Pawłowski from the Department of Palliative Medicine at the Medical University in Gdańsk. Three research questions are guiding the project:

- What is the current status of the bilateral cooperation between specialist palliative care services from the WHO European region?
- What factors contributed to improving the bilateral cooperation between specialist palliative care services from the WHO European region?
- What are the wishes and future needs for bilateral cooperation between specialist palliative care services abroad in the WHO European region?

The data collected form the basis for the information platform to be created and are therefore of great importance for the work of the Institute. The total number of specialized services for the WHO European region is more than 6,000 [5]. Currently, therefore, specialized facilities and services in palliative care and their contacts for answering the questionnaire are being searched and recorded in elaborate recruitment. Necessary inclusion criteria for this have been formulated. The publication of the research results is planned for 2024.

Declaration of conflict of interests

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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