Medication errors: Some perspectives from the ECO Workforce and Digital Health Network

About us

About us

40 member organisations

advised by

20 patient societies

Working together to achieve a shared mission

To reduce the burden of cancer, improve outcomes and the quality of care for cancer patients, through multidisciplinarity and multiprofessionalism.

Our Strategy 2020-23

Pillar 1: Policy and Advocacy

- On behalf of our Member Societies, we strive to be a leading organisation in **the development of oncopolicy and advocacy at the European level**

- On behalf of our Member Societies, we are available as **a resource to European institutions to convene and facilitate** across disciplines, professions and with patient advocates

- We advocate on key policy issues, **speaking with one voice** on behalf of our Member Societies and patient groups, to enhance the impact of their expertise and experience

Pillar 2: Convenor and Facilitator around Focused Topics

- We act as **the "federation" of the European cancer community** - amplifying the important work of our member societies and Patient Advisory Committee.

- We convene our Member Societies, patient groups and other stakeholders for **discussion and exchange, building consensus and co-ordinating activities**, including through our **Focused Topic Networks.**

- We believe in **collaboration**, bringing together those who share our Mission and Vision to promote multidisciplinarity and multi-professionalism for the benefit of patients, as well as **advocating across Europe for our agreed policies.**

Focused Topic Networks

Prevention, Early Detection & Screening Network

HPV Action Network

Health Systems and Treatment Optimisation Network

Quality Cancer Care Network

Survivorship and Quality of Life Network

Digital Health Network

Inequalities Network

Workforce Network

Special Network Impact of Covid-19 on Cancer

info@europeancancer.org

Preventing Medication Errors

A pressing workforce concern

Digital opportunities for improvement

The Workforce Network

Our joint positioning

Working Against Cancer: Giving Professionals the Right Tools for the Job

07 April 2021

The European Cancer Organisation (E.C.O.) has published a consensus paper conveying the critical challenges for the cancer workforce in the context of implementing Europe's Beating Cancer Plan. The four key challenges are described as:

- Resolving the difficulties caused by workforce shortages
- Reducing unnecessary barriers to professional mobility
- Improving occupational conditions to protect the safety and well-being of healthcare professionals working in cancer care
- Enhancing education and development opportunities for healthcare professionals that are now even more achievable in the digital age

The Report, '*Working Against Cancer: Giving Professionals the Right Tools for the Job*', was written in close consultation with the Workforce Network of the

Working Against Cancer: Giving Professionals the Right Tools for the Job

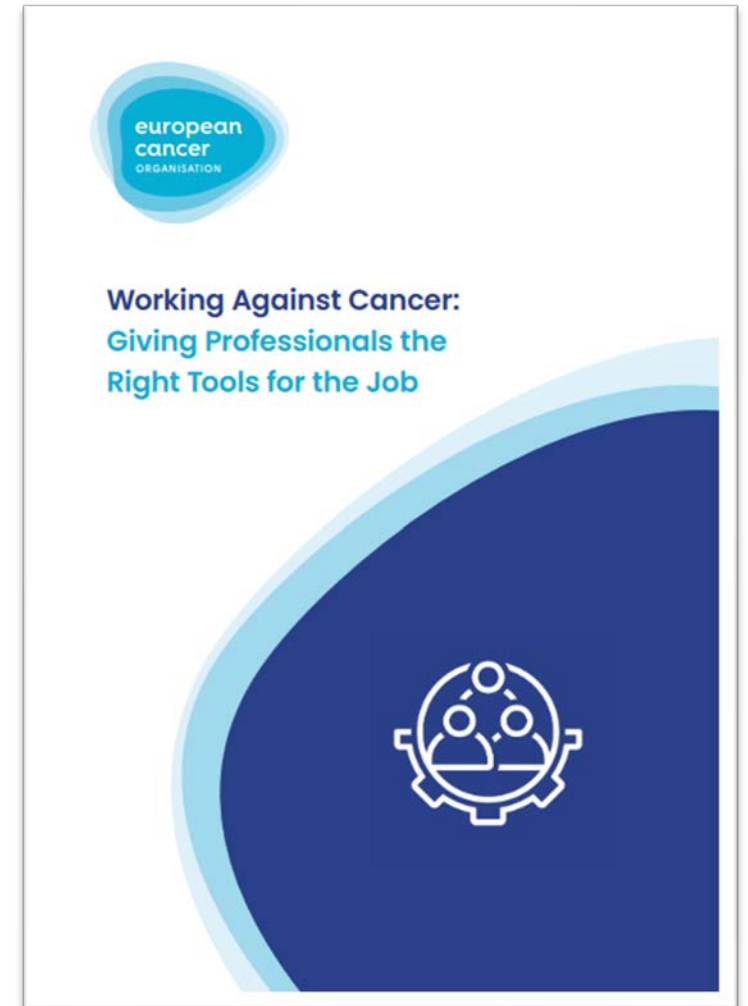**Related Resources**

Download the Report

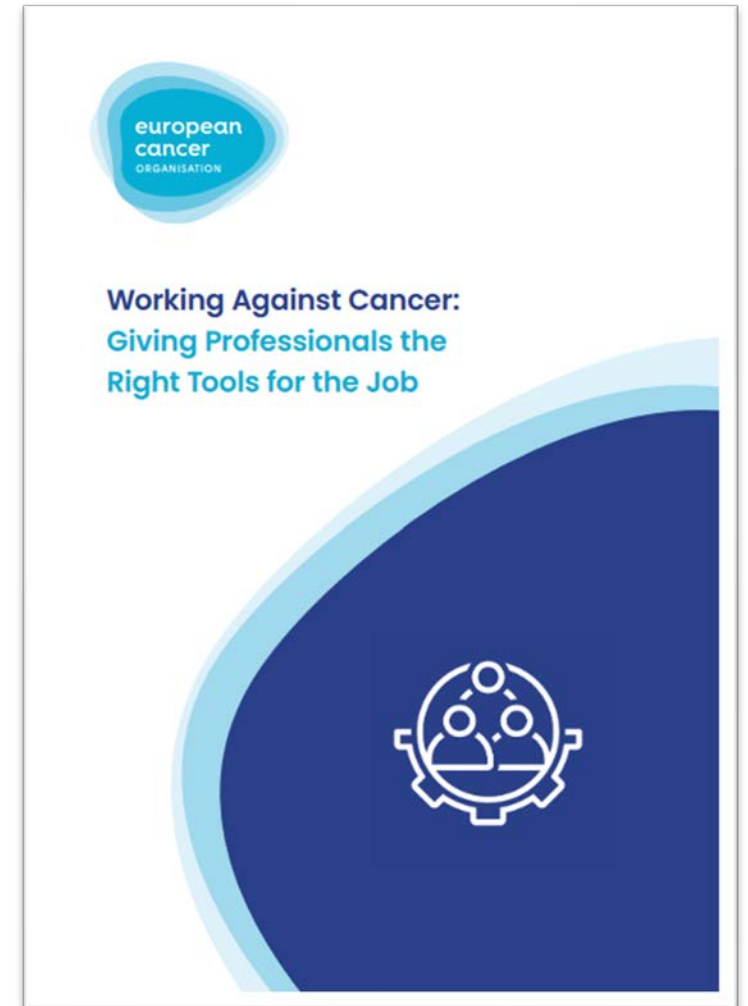# To Err is Human: The need for an EU agenda on preventing medication error

- Individual mistakes and technological error occur in every walk of life, and in all occupational fields

- However, in the cancer workplace environment, such errors can have devastating or even fatal impact for patients, and also healthcare professionals

- As of now, the European Union has a greatly underplayed role in helping to reduce the possibilities for error, and in assisting health systems achieve a caring and understanding environment for professionals when they do.

- Too often, if the supportive environment is not well calibrated, the sense of responsibility when an error occurs may become unduly individualised by healthcare professionals, leading to high degrees of stress and trauma, with long-term consequences for the well-being of the professional.

- Alarming cases of its impact, including documented cases of suicide, are achieving a greater level of public consciousness

Working Against Cancer: Giving Professionals the Right Tools for the Job

Our recommendations

All healthcare systems in Europe should be undertaking work to assure an environment in which healthcare professionals, including those working in cancer, are:

- Educated appropriately to have a knowledge and understanding that will enable them to recognise common potential sources of error and risk (**'safety literacy'**);

- Supported in making use of technology and tools that protect patient safety;

- Encouraged to report errors and near-misses when they do occur for the purposes of achieving a continuously improving safety culture and record;

- Supported when errors do occur, including being proactively provided with access to psychological support

european cancer ORGANISATION

Working Against Cancer: Giving Professionals the Right Tools for the Job

Time for an EU patient safety agenda

The Workforce Network therefore calls the European Union and its Member States to recognise and address the issue of errors and adverse events in cancer, as well as their consequences for involved professionals.

An EU agenda on patient safety should be developed, involving all relevant services of the European Commission, including DG SANTE (health systems), DG EMPL (occupational health and safety), DG GROW (patient safety inclusion with recognised healthcare professional curricula), DG Connect and DG Research.

Such an EU patient safety agenda should encompass guidance and recommendations to Member States on the **establishment of strong patient safety cultures,** which encourage reporting of errors and adverse events, the provision of **adequate digital systems that can help prevent such incidents,** and the **support to be provided to healthcare professionals when errors do occur.**
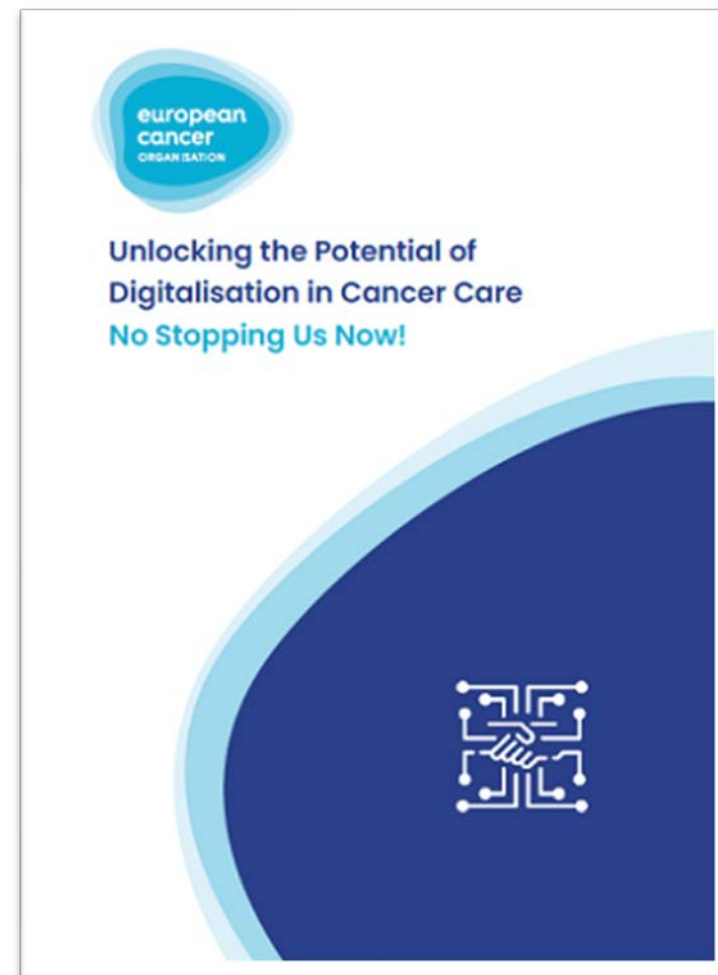
The Digital Health Network

Our 2021 paper: Unlocking the potential of Digitalisation in Cancer Care

The paper highlighted the great breadth of opportunities that digital solutions can provide for improvement across the whole continuum of cancer care.

This very much includes patient safety and the reduction of medication errors.

This includes implementing technologies in healthcare settings that can reduce errors, for example, through the use of barcode scanning technologies, and using technology and data tools to improve our understanding of, and the visibility of, medication error.

Among our recommendations included pan European efforts to improve digital health literacy, increasing knowledge and understanding across the healthcare service of where digital solutions can provide redress to common and long-standing problems in health and oncology care, including medication error.

Unlocking the Potential of Digitalisation in Cancer Care
No Stopping Us Now!

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Final remarks

Putting medication error reduction on the political agenda: some other reflections

An EU agenda on reducing medication error might further include:

- Deepening our understanding of the scale of the problem at a pan-European level via EU research streams

- Common targets on the reduction of medication error (& aligning with WHO)

- Common recommendations to Member States on reducing medication errors

- Ensuring the EU's impressive digital agenda is also targeted towards digital's potential for medication error reduction

- Ensuring other EU policy agendas include attention to medication error:
    - Europe's Beating Cancer Plan (Inequalities Registry; EU Network CCCs)
    - The forthcoming EU NCD Initiative (co-morbidity angles)
    - HERA and workforce planning

Reducing medication error is a multi-disciplinary and multi-stakeholder effort.

Thank you ECAMET for bringing us together.

ECAMET — European Alliance for Access to Safe Medicines

WHITE PAPER
Call to Action developed by the ECAMET Alliance on

The Urgent Need to Reduce Medication Errors in Hospitals to Prevent Patient and Second Victim Harm

March 2022