



## Interview: dr. Orsolya Pacsay-Tomassich

Within the 3rd steering group meeting of the INTENT project, held February, 19<sup>th</sup>- 20<sup>th</sup> 2019 in Budapest, Hungary dr. Orsolya Pacsay-Tomassich, Madame State Secretary for International Affairs at Ministry of Human Capacities welcomed the consortium and shared with us some thoughts on approaches to cancer care.

Cancer is one of the leading causes of death worldwide. So far, a great amount of successful interventions, regarding models of cancer care, has been developed. However, many of them originate in a traditional approach, while evidence shows there is a strong need to adopt the patient-centred models of care. What is your opinion on the importance of piloting the implementation of a patient-centred cancer care model in Hungary at the National Institute of Oncology?

I feel that piloting the patient-centered model of care in Hungary is an important milestone in Hungarian oncology for I am convinced that patients would greatly benefit from many aspects of the model. This is the first time such a model of care is being tested in Hungary and we are looking forward to the INTENT project's outcomes, specifically on the dimensions of patient literacy, the continuity of care as well as patient safety and education.

The INTENT project aims to find solutions for innovative patient-centred cancer care. It targets and involves various types of actors (cancer care providers, patients and policy makers) to create a better understanding on how to interpret the patient-centred approach and identify ways for improving cancer care in central Europe. What is your perspective on that from the standpoint of a policy maker? Why do you find this important and what do you find the most important when addressing this health issue?

As a policy maker, I think it is important that all actors are involved in developing a patient-centered model of care and to gain a better understanding of this approach in Central Europe. In Hungary, the oncology care is organized centrally. The most important element when addressing cancer care is being able to adapt the model in the Hungarian context and to the patients' needs at a local level. In order to achieve change at a local level a cancer network is needed where all care providers are involved. The foundations of this network in Hungary were laid in 2014 with the coordination of the National Institute of Oncology with the participation of the four regional cancer centres (in the cities of Debrecen, Pécs, Szeged and Szombathely) and the network continues to be developed.

Beyond the activities leading to an innovative cancer care model, the INTENT project will issue policy recommendations, provide an online benchmarking tool, identify



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priorities for improving existing systems on local level and create a virtual know-how centre. Why do you think it's important to have these? Can you foresee the benefits that cancer patients across the EU countries can have out of it?

Beside the innovative cancer care model it is important to have the online benchmarking tool and the virtual know-how center to support the local implementation in a centralized system. Cancer patients would greatly benefit if by utilizing these tools at the regional and local cancer care providers, the inequalities in the quality of cancer care across Europe could be reduced.



The INTENT policy recommendations for adopting patient-centred model and guidelines will help local authorities to implement actions defined at regional and national level. National ministries and health authorities should support local authorities in implementation of the INTENT Policy recommendations for adopting the patient-centred care model. How can a policy and decision maker, like you, promote and support implementation of these interventions?

Hungarian policy makers are aware that adopting the patient-centered model of care requires support from the national authorities. The National Cancer Control Program (NCCP) was most recently updated in 2018 and policy makers would be open to further integrate into it any actual policy recommendations from the INTENT pilot that could be adopted to the Hungarian context.

Within the INTENT project there will be pilot actions on 5 pilot sites in Czech Republic (South Moravian region), Hungary (Budapest region), Italy (Veneto region, Friuli-Venezia Giulia region), and Slovenia. Piloting is key to assessing how practical the patient-centred cancer care model and online benchmarking tools are in implementing a patient-centred approach to improve patient benefits and outcomes achieved by public cancer care providers in Central Europe. In Hungary, the National Institute of Oncology will be a pilot site for testing the patient-centered model of care. Why do you think piloting the model is crucial?

Piloting of any innovations is crucial, especially in health care. Due to its complexity and national and regional specificities as well as risk factors involved, new models of care and innovations need to be carefully and repeatedly tested before introducing them on a larger scale. The National Institute of Oncology is the methodological, organizational, cancer prevention, training, treatment, and scientific co-ordinating centre for Hungarian oncology. It is the most ideal place to pilot such an innovative model. We expect positive results from this project and we support these activities from the policy makers' point of view.

The project aims towards sustainable solutions. How can you promote and support these interventions after the end of a project in Hungary?

Sustainability is the key to the success of this project. On a policy maker level, we will carefully evaluate the project outcomes and we are open to implement the recommendations, if suitable, on a larger scale to benefit Hungarian cancer patients.