2nd EORTC Symposium:
Quality of Life, Symptom Research and Patient-Reported Outcomes in Cancer Clinical Trials

The 2011 EORTC Symposium held at the European Parliament in Brussels last 7-9 September confirmed the international attention paid to Quality of Life for cancer patients. The event enhanced the previous Symposium by introducing innovations on health related quality of life, symptom research and cancer clinical trials, including their design, implementation and analysis. Thanks to an extraordinary collaboration with the Portuguese Member of the European Parliament Marisa Matias, it was possible to give an institutional framework to the scientific gathering and engage a constructive debate with the European legislators and policy makers.

During the three-day event 31 Faculty, international leaders in their fields, presented diverse perspectives on HRQOL. All the different stakeholders in clinical research were involved including European patient groups. Patricia Garcia-Prieto and Susanne [illegible] from the ECPC (European Cancer Patient Coalition), Jan Geissler from CML Advocates network and Louis Denis from Europa Uomo gave an insight into the patient experience, addressing difficulties such as access to international clinical trials, survivorship issues etc.

The figures fully confirmed the success of the event, with 240 attendees from 44 different countries and the positive feedback from the participants wishing to repeat the experience. Andrew Bottomley, Head of the QOL Department and Symposium Chair, announced a 2012 Conference (17-19 October) co-funded by a European Commission grant with the aim to give continuity to this initiative.

In order to facilitate the participation of young investigators and those from developing countries the EORTC created a Travel Fellowship program. Hundreds of applications were submitted, and the QOL Scientific Committee selected with scrupulous care the 30 awarded from many worthwhile candidates with promising CVs. The awarded Fellows represented 23 countries, bringing a particular and fresh view. We asked the Fellows to talk about their Symposium experience and here are accounts of young investigators from Poland, Portugal, Malaysia, Egypt and China describing not only the scientific value but also the networking opportunities the Symposium represented for them.

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I am a 26-year old medical doctor from Poland. I am currently in my internship year and working at the J. Dietl Specialistic Hospital in Krakow, Poland. As for next years' plans I am going to start my PhD studies at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow and continue my work as a physician.

My scientific interests focus mainly on health-related quality of life and overall physical and mental well-being of patients. As a medical doctor I am trying to popularize the concept that though fighting to cure patients is of great importance, doctors cannot forget that for some patients good quality of life is more important than prolonging life "no matter the cost".

Currently I am involved in a series of projects focused on translating and validating the EORTC's tools for health-related quality of life assessment in cancer patients. Even though most of EORTC's tools have been translated into Polish, not all of them have been psychometrically validated. So there is still lot of work ahead.

Quality of life concepts are quite popular in my country and many researchers work in that field. Quality of life starts to be seen as a possible outcome measure in clinical trials in Poland, thus the need [illegible]

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