

**Increasing consciousness and access to treatment, reducing the burden of cardiovascular diseases
across Europe
EUROPEAN TRAINING SEMINARS ON-LINE
29th October 2020**

Session: “Primary prevention, healthy people at risk”

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Closing remarks

Good afternoon everybody!

Before saying thanks and goodbye and meeting us again tomorrow,

In the next few minutes I would like to share with you some thoughts on this project.

This is a project that was born well before the COVID-19 pandemic. Inevitably, the pandemic stopped it, also because our scientific partner is represented by family doctors, who were obviously at the forefront of the fight against the pandemic and therefore they were, and still are, very busy.

I remember receiving emails during the past months from many of you asking for information on when this project would start, demonstrating high expectations. We hope to be meeting your expectations.

We are proud to have started today a series of training seminars, but at the same time **we cannot participate in this project without keeping in mind how and how much the pandemic has affected the lives of patients, including those suffering from cardiovascular diseases.**

Across the world, oncological and chronic patients, including people affected by NCDs, have been left almost alone for a while now, and at the end of the emergency, we will count not only the deaths due to Covid-19, but also the number of people who died because they didn't have a chance to care for themselves.

For instance, just talking about CVDs:

- [In Italy, the fear of infection has tripled the mortality rate due to heart attacks from 4.1% to 13.7%:](#) a situation that risks burning 20 years of prevention. According to the **Italian Society of Cardiology** (Sic), the causes range from **lack of care (the reduction in hospitalizations was of 60%) to delays (times increased by 39%)**, linked to the fear of contagion. Some comments:
- "Cardiovascular diseases haven't gone away, but the cardiology clinics are closed".
- [Although the Covid pandemic was mainly concentrated in the north of Italy, the reduction in hospitalizations for heart attacks has been homogeneously recorded throughout the country: 52.1% in the North and South and 59.3% in the Centre.](#)

A situation confirmed also at the global level by the European Society of Cardiology, that early in June denounced that the number of heart attack patients seeking urgent hospital care has dropped by more than 50% during the Covid-19 pandemic.

“This is the strongest evidence yet of the collateral damage caused by the pandemic. Fear of catching the coronavirus means even people in the midst of a life-threatening heart attack are too afraid to go to hospitals for life-saving treatment. There has been a lack of public reassurance that every possible

effort has been made to provide clean hospital areas for non-COVID-19 patients,” said ESC President Professor Barbara Casadei.

“Yet the risk of dying of a heart attack is much greater than that of dying of COVID-19. Moreover, cardiac death is largely preventable if patients with a heart attack come to the hospital in time to get treatment. **What we are witnessing is an unnecessary loss of life. Our priority must be to stop this from happening. We must continue to save the lives we know how to save.**”

I encourage all of us to reflect on these very clear and strong messages.

Also for this reason, besides the several meeting already planned throughout this project,

I would like to involve you in other appointments to better investigate the impact of the pandemic in each of your country, with particular concern to patients suffering from cardiovascular diseases and to the health care facilities dedicated to them.

This will allow us to explore the most recurrent obstacles, the responses that have been put in place, the best practices, the lessons learnt and the **ways in which we can contribute to make our national health systems more resilient**, as well as to **discuss health priorities** and what we would like the European Institutions to do in this regard.

Certainly, the situation we are living today makes this project more relevant than ever.

Therefore, I would like to thank those who believed in our idea since the beginning, namely Bayer through Claire Martin and Paul Field, that tomorrow will be in the panel, the President of SIMG-Italian Society of General Medicine and Primary Care Claudio Cricelli, who did not hesitate to provide the scientific support to the project by involving his HCPs colleagues present here today and whom I thank one by one, starting with Damiano Parretti, Alessandra Medolla, Stefano Celotto, Marco Vatri, Luca Degli Esposti.

Thanks also to the 18 associations that have joined the project with enthusiasm and to **the expert associations** that have agreed to share their practical experience.

As always, I thank my precious colleagues, starting with those you don't see here, namely Sergio, Elisa, Bianca, Manuela, Maira, Federico, and of course Daniela, who moderated this meeting.

This is all for today. I am looking forward to meeting you all tomorrow, always at 16.30 for the new Session titled: “Know yourself to take care of your own risk”.

Thanks to all the people who remained connected until the end. Have a good evening.