



UNION EUROPÉENNE DES MÉDECINS SPÉCIALISTES EUROPEAN UNION OF MEDICAL SPECIALISTS

Association internationale sans but lucratif International non-profit organisation

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A UEMS Initiative in Support of Colleagues in Private Practice (INSUCOPP)

By UEMS Vice Presidents Marc Hermans and Andreas Papandroudis

Dear Colleagues,

The COVID-19 pandemic has put a huge strain on all health care workers in various ways. Many of us look back to less stressful times and hope to return to “normal”. However, we humans are mostly adjusting and adapting to new situations. Therefore it's not probable that we as doctors will return to the previous “normal”. The future normal will be different from the actual one. And we have to prepare for it.

Very recently the Bureau of the UEMS Section of Dermatology-Venereology brought to the attention of the members of the Enlarged Executive Committee (EEC) the particular difficulties our colleagues dermatologists faced during this pandemic. Their letter made it quite evident that most probably other medical specialists faced and still face similar problems. Very rightly so, the medical task force spent major attention to severely ill patients and their medical carers. But the focus of interest has thereby been put mainly on hospitals, less on general practitioners and far less on medical specialists in private practice.

The EEC officers noticed that a significant number of colleagues have seen their activities decrease with 75-80%, sometimes even prohibited by measures imposed by the authorities. This situation evidently has in many cases led to a delay in diagnosis, a lack of necessary care for serious pathology, worsening the prognosis and actual medical condition for the concerned patients.

Therefore the UEMS' EEC wants to obtain more adequate information about practicing conditions for colleagues from all specialties working in a private practice context, be it in solo or in group practices, part time or full time. The EEC's intends to develop a document cooperating with other European Medical Organisations (EMOs), in order to request the attention of the authorities for these aspects.

The pandemic has stunningly shown that medical practice is now subject to big changes. Concerning aspects of practicing in a private context, conceived as within the personal home of the physician or more generally within an extrahospital environment, it became clear that this aspect of medical practice has stayed below the radar of UEMS interests. From an intramural perspective, conceived as group practices or intrahospital medical practice, it was suggested that a

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hierarchical list of urgent interventions for each specialty could be very useful. This hierarchy could mirror the needs for acute care during a particular episode, not only during a pandemic, but also during more general disasters with repercussions on medical care.

One might consider the impact of the pandemic from different perspectives. The loss of income due to a significantly diminished work volume may be particularly painful for younger colleagues. Smaller work volumes may be due to all kind of restrictions, imposed by governments, management's decisions or patients' attitudes. At the same time colleagues had to adjust their usual working practices, to adapt to different logistics, to face changing payment conditions or to seeing a lower number of patients. Colleagues have been confronted with difficulties with regard to consecutively changing rules to comply with, changing professional protocols and guidance, supplementary safety measures, obtaining protective equipment, non-existing reimbursement or payment for patient related work. The dramatically fast switch from face to face contacts to online consultations might be very illustrative next to the widely spread use of plexiglass screens.

Given postgraduate training is one of the main pillars of UEMS's interests it's obvious that the recent experiences must significantly impact undergraduate and postgraduate medical training. Certainly with the increasingly decreasing hospitalisation time, extrahospital medical care within the community is increasingly relevant. This will certainly impact general practitioners' work but evenly evident medical specialists' activities.

Therefore the EEC invites its member National Medical Associations (NMAs), its Sections and all European Medical Specialists to offer feedback. The focus of attention may be put on actual difficulties that physicians face in private practices in every aspect of their clinical work, in their continuous professional development (CME-CPD) activities.

The EEC members welcome information about future developments and suggestions about specific measures and actions expected to be taken for particular issues.

Though the EEC's officers are well aware that many surveys have been sent to you, they do urge you to respect the deadlines proposed below.

Deadline to send feedback : February 3rd, 2021.