

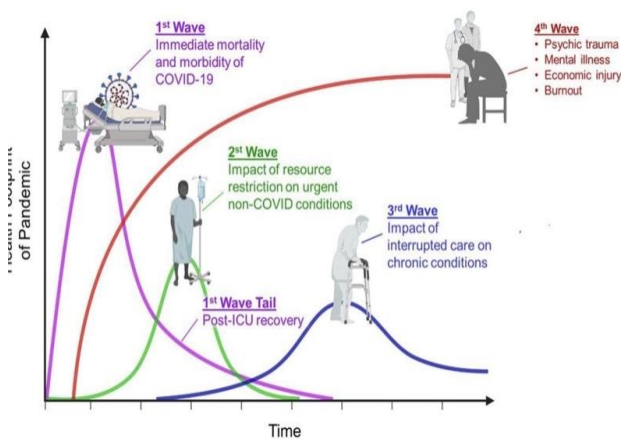
PRESS RELEASE

Ensuring a rapid resumption of oncology care after the COVID-19 crisis: All.Can Belgium commits to provide expertise and support to the Group of Experts in charge of the Exit Strategy (GEES)

Brussels, 20 April 2020 - All.Can Belgium is a platform that brings together patient and care representatives, healthcare professionals, health experts, and industry representatives. All are mobilising for sustainable, efficient, innovative and patient-centred cancer care.

In many countries where the pandemic is rampant, the European Society of Medical Oncology (ESOM) reports that doctors often decide on a case-by-case basis whether cancer treatment should be initiated or continued, whether a visit is really necessary or whether it can be postponed. In Belgium, like other health actors, All.Can Belgium members make the same observation and notice a very limited access to necessary care, screening, diagnosis or treatment of the disease. This situation, imposed by the urgency and the extent of the current crisis, is very worrying and requires us to start thinking about an exit-strategy after the containment period in order to avoid a wave of collateral victims among cancer patients.

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All.Can Belgium asks to be able to bring its expertise and experience to the GEES in order to develop together an exit plan from the containment period for oncology care. All.Can Belgium adheres to the already formulated request for priority access to screening tests but also to serological tests for antibody detection in order to ensure as quickly as possible the operability of the centers which take care of urgent pathologies such as cancer.

Pending the end of the containment period, it is important to continue to clearly inform cancer patients of the measures to be taken to avoid getting infected by the COVID-19, but also of any changes to their treatment protocols. This applies to all cancer pathologies and particularly to patients who are older or have serious co-morbidities.

Professor Awada, medical oncologist at the Jules Bordet Institute: *"Continuity of care must be encouraged and must be facilitated by increased use of telemedicine services. Patients need to know that we are listening to them and that we are there to support them in their treatment, even in times of crisis. »*

¹ Source illustration: from dr. Victor Tseng, cardiopulmonaire and critical care specialist (USA)



Changing cancer care together

All.Can Belgium also reminds that there are free telephone helplines, Q&A and psychological support by telephone available (e.g. by the [Foundation against Cancer](#)) for cancer patients and their families. The diagnosis, the treatment, but also the aftercare are struggles that one cannot endure on their own.

Doctor Anne Rogiers, psychiatrist and Deputy Head of Clinic of the Department of Psychiatry at Brugmann University Hospital: *“Being told that you have cancer, undergoing treatment, but also aftercare are very difficult emotional moments in a person's life. Patients often suffer from sleep disturbances, stress, fear of relapse or feelings of uncertainty about the future. They also often have psychosocial problems such as difficult reintegration into the labour market, financial difficulties or depression. The COVID-19 crisis makes the situation of these patients even more difficult. Continuity of medical care, including psychological follow-up, is vital and must be guaranteed as much as possible, both during and after the containment period.”*

Finally, All.Can Belgium would like to pay tribute and express its support to all the healthcare professionals who are working on the front line in the fight against COVID-19 and who, every day, care for the many patients without counting their hours or efforts. In order to enable all the care providers, including those in cancerology, to continue to administer quality care after the COVID-19 crisis, significant resources, particularly financial resources, will have to be made available.

Additional information :

All.Can Belgium: <https://www.all-can.org/national-initiatives/belgium/>

All.Can international: <https://www.all-can.org/news/latest-news/all-can-statement-regarding-continuity-of-cancer-care-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/>

Foundation against Cancer: <https://www.cancer.be/coronavirus>

<https://plus.lesoir.be/292942/article/2020-04-07/un-plan-national-de-sante-pour-eviter-une-deuxieme-crise>

More information on All.Can Belgium :

<https://www.all-can.org/national-initiatives/belgium/>

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