

Maintaining cancer treatments & ensuring the safety of both patients and staff during the COVID-19 crisis

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#IHFCOVIDForum

Introducing Unicancer

- **The only French federation and hospital network 100% dedicated to fighting cancer**
 - Unicancer brings together the French Comprehensive Cancer Centres (FCCCs) around a shared medical/scientific project, pooling their strategic activities (cancer research, purchasing, human resources, hospital strategy, quality control, IT, etc.) to give a new dynamic to patient care

- **We are:**
 - **The network of the 18 French Comprehensive Cancer Centres (FCCCs)** – private non-profit comprehensive cancer centres – spread **over 20 hospital sites**
 - **More than 21,000 women and men** committed, on a daily basis, in a permanent quest for excellence in healthcare, research and higher education
 - **More than 530,000 patients treated each year**
 - **A Federation:**
 - One of the 4 hospital federations in France
 - Representing and defending the interests of its members (FCCCs)
 - **An employers' organisation**, managing the collective agreement for all Centres' employees
 - The **leading research actor in France**, the Unicancer network produces one third of French publications at the international level in the field of oncology*

- **Unicancer is our shared brand, used by all FCCCs, but also the name of our shared structures:**
 - The National Federation of FCCCs and its staff, as well as the Unicancer health cooperation group (GCS) intended to pool the strategic activities of all Centres and make progress in their skills, resources and practices
 - Guaranteeing of a cancer care model specific to FCCCs, based on an integral approach to patient care, multidisciplinary practice, individualised treatment and a research-healthcare continuum

* Source : bibliometric study / Thomson Reuters

Our missions

- ▣ **Supporting a cancer care model specific to FCCCs**, combining excellence, humanism, solidarity and innovation
 - ▣ Through oncology prospective studies
 - ▣ Through its medico-scientific shared project
 - ▣ Supporting the centres' quality approach
 - ▣ Disseminating best practices and supporting innovation in care
- ▣ **Representing the interests** and the role of FCCCs with the public authorities
- ▣ **Driving oncology clinical research** at the European level (academic sponsor)
- ▣ **Improving the medico-economic performance** of the Centres
- ▣ **Representing the Centres at the national and international level**, as a representative hospital federation
- ▣ **Pooling resources and purchases** for all Centres, thus allowing equipment innovation and overall savings

Shared brand / Shared values



A shared brand, which unifies all FCCCs, and a common visual identity:
the Unicancer logo next to the one of each Centre



□ Humanism

More than 21,000 women and men committed to human-centred medicine that respects each patient



□ Excellence

A permanent quest for excellence on a daily basis, to be at the forefront of the fight against cancer



□ Solidarity

FCCCs are healthcare centres with a public service mission, accessible to everyone without exceeding fees



□ Innovation

FCCCs are driven by a research culture, source of shared progress and aiming to improve treatment and care for everyone

Introductory remarks:

- The health crisis we are currently going through highlighted the importance of some essential values carried by the actors of our healthcare system:
 - the recognition of health as a non-negotiable public good, the dedication and humanity of our caregivers, and the strength of collective mobilization
 - the extraordinary ability of all stakeholders to invent solutions, to set up more agile organizational settings and to initiate new collaborations
- The Covid-19 crisis confirmed the ability of the FCCCs to react effectively in a very complex situation, guaranteeing the best possible care
- The biggest challenge for our Centres:
 - To ensure the continuity of patients' treatment and care, by quickly reorganizing their services and introducing innovative solutions

Unicancer et FCCCs during the crisis

- Continuing to diagnose patients, avoiding therefore any possible risk on health outcomes, in a difficult context
 - Daily contacts and relations with the healthcare authorities (Ministry, regional health agencies)
 - Dissemination of a therapeutic strategy for cancer patients during the pandemic period to Unicancer's members and to the French Academy of Medicine
 - Support to other non-FCCC hospitals : providing equipment (ventilators, intensive care beds), healthcare professionals, collaboration in surgery, hospitalizing covid-19 patients without any cancerous pathology
- General awareness raising on the worrying decrease in diagnoses (and medical consultations) for over 2 months

Adapt organizational settings & continue to treat cancer patients

- In less than three weeks, all FCCCs reorganized their services to both inform patients and to ensure the continuity of patient care in complete safety
- Maintain urgent and essential healthcare for patients recently diagnosed or undergoing treatment
 - Reschedule a few non-urgent activities
 - Service continuity: surgery, radiotherapy and chemotherapy
 - Care continuity, in close collaboration with partner hospitals and private healthcare professionals
 - Promote “hospital-at-home” and other forms of distance consultations (e-health, oral chemotherapies, etc.).
 - Rethinking the “patient journey”
- In the most affected regions, a few FCCC also welcomed COVID-19 patients not suffering from cancer, in order to relieve “front line” hospitals

Protect, train, inform and reassure

- Dissemination of recommendations and coordination of actions between different hospitals and healthcare centres
- Ensure the protection of patients and staff:
 - Recall health safety measures and instructions in situ
 - Obligation of wearing masks, personal protection equipment, hydro-alcoholic gel, safety protocols, patients' guided paths inside the hospital, healthcare or administrative procedures, etc.
 - Monitoring and filtering points with temperature control at the entrances
- Several dedicated trainings were also initiated and carried out for the Centres' staff
- Psychological support to Centres' staff
 - Phone hotline, online resources, medico-psychological emergency unit, individual interviews, visits to services or support groups, etc.
- Creation of several communication tools to protect and inform patients and their families
 - FCCC's websites, social media, dedicated applications, online question-and-answer videos, hotlines, information websites, informative SMS to patients

Research: studies and clinical trials

- Launch of several studies and clinical trials by the FCCC
 - 5 studies (therapeutic intervention or surveillance):
 - One study has already been published and included 300 patients
 - Another one is in the process of being published, with 1200 patients included. It shows a mortality of approximately 30% after 30 days of cancer patients with Covid-19 – tested with RT-PCR (Reverse Transcription Polymerase Chain Reaction) – against an average rate of 4% (excluding the epidemic)

Diagnostic delays with a negative impact on health outcomes

- Since the start of the crisis, diagnostic consultations declined: a worrying fact that raises concerns about diagnosis and treatment delays, which in turn could generate considerable risks in terms of patients' outcomes and a loss of opportunities to be effectively healed
 - A strong decrease (between 5 and 30 %) in the number of diagnoses during the period March-April
 - A major risk for patients' health
 - **In oncology, early diagnosis is key to maximizing the chances of cure. Any delay in diagnosis and in the management of cancers has direct consequences on the chances of survival and recovery of patients**
- Activity resumed a "normal" rhythm as from May 2020, maintaining innovative solutions (e-health consultation, in particular) and health security protocols that were in place during the first wave of the pandemic

Conclusion

- In this complicated period, hospitals (and, more specifically, cancer centres) must:
 - Ensure the continuity of cancer treatment and the safety of both patients and hospital staff
 - Inform / communicate / reassure / support patients and their families
 - Train professionals to face the “new normality”
 - Have sufficient stocks of masks and personal protective equipment
- Reorganize their services and adapt their daily activity, by applying the recommendations of national health authorities
- Maintain diagnostics, treatment, care and follow-up, in particular thanks to innovative solutions

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