



Conference report - ONCA Turin Conference 2024

DAY 1: Thursday, 6th June

Welcome

Antonella Lezo, President of SINPE, Italian Society for Clinical Nutrition, and Professor Olle Ljungqvist, Director of European Nutrition for Health Alliance, co-hosted the event in Turin and online. The conference featured delegations from 20 countries and many virtual attendees. Lezo thanked the ONCA staff and co-organizer Andrea Pezzana for their contributions. Italy joined ONCA three years ago, and SINPE's creation of a comprehensive dashboard on malnutrition laid the groundwork for increased engagement, including the annual Malnutrition Awareness Week enhancing awareness and involvement of all the stakeholders in the fight against malnutrition. The ONCA experience in Italy brought together scientific societies, patient associations, the medical nutrition industry and health economics for the first time. A crucial point is the support from the Ministry of Health and health managers for this global initiative to efficiently translate clinical nutrition science and experience in helpful policies in healthcare. The session included a short video from SINPE's Malnutrition Awareness Week 2023.

Franco Ripa, Deputy Director of the Regional Health Department.

This one of the most significant events of the year in the Piedmont Region, addressing a crucial issue with significant epidemiological and health impacts. It underscores the need for a multi-sector approach, as confirmed by the presence of Jacopo Rosatelli from the municipality. The Piedmont Region has a robust clinical nutrition network, fostering high connectivity with both the government and users, aligned with common goals. Today's event serves as a buster of the practical activity and we will surely have a briefing to build on shared discussions and insights. Special thanks go to Antonella Lezo and Andrea Pezzana for their commitment.

Jacopo Rosatelli, Councilor for Welfare, Rights and Equal Opportunities of the City of Turin.

On behalf of Mayor Stefano Lo Russo and the City administration, the speaker expressed great honor in welcoming attendees to the International Optimal Nutrition Care for All Conference in Torino. The conference takes place in a city that values health as a comprehensive state of well-being, as defined by the World Health Organization. The Italian Constitution emphasizes that health is a fundamental right and a communal concern. Torino has demonstrated this commitment through various initiatives aimed at addressing food inequality and promoting a fair and sustainable food system. In 2017, the city promoted the implementation of the right to adequate food as part of its mission. The Statute of



The Turin ONCA Conference

June 6 & 7 2024



the City of Turin ensures access to nutritious, healthy, culturally and religiously appropriate food. Recently, Torino signed a Memorandum of Understanding focused on health promotion and nutrition education across all levels of the food chain and available to all and supported by alliances and synergies between various stakeholders. Additionally, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Torino established TorinoSolidale, a charity network supporting food distribution to families in need, which has since evolved into a stable platform for food solidarity and community empowerment.

Professor Olle Ljungqvist, chairman of the European Nutrition for Health Alliance (ENHA), welcomed everyone to the conference, expressing his joy at returning to Italy and appreciating its hospitality. He reflected on the success of the ONCA campaign, which began ten years ago and continues to thrive with the addition of Norway as the 21st country to join and over 16 malnutrition awareness weeks conducted. He highlighted that the campaign's mission is to translate nutritional care science into effective policies and emphasized the importance of patient collaboration in achieving these goals. He also mentioned the EU4orHealth National Implementation Fund available for advancing new healthcare practices. Professor Ljungqvist briefly discussed his own project, Enhanced Recovery After Surgery, which focuses on improving patient outcomes through better nutritional management and care. There is a need to avoid working in silos in healthcare management due to time constraints and poor control over the entire patient's journey. He stressed the importance of comprehensive care approaches and the need for continuous improvement in healthcare practices.

Session 1: NUTRITIONAL CARE: HOW DO WE GET FROM AWARENESS TO CONTROL?

Setting the scene: Implementing Nutritional Care for Optimal Health

Dr. Andrea Pezzana, Coordinator of the Piedmont Clinical Nutrition Network, discussed the complexity of nutritional care for optimal health, emphasizing a broad definition of health. He addressed the intricate issue of malnutrition, illustrating it with images from the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025). He stressed that malnutrition is influenced by environmental and lifestyle factors, impacting both the cost and quality of life for patients. Addressing it requires a collaborative, multifaceted approach involving more than just individual professionals. Dr. Pezzana highlighted the "triple burden" of global malnutrition: undernutrition, overweight and obesity, and hidden hunger (micronutrient deficiencies), underscoring their significance in chronic disease prevention. He advocated for rethinking health as more than just the absence of illness, aligning with the One Health framework, which integrates human, animal, and environmental health. He pointed out that malnutrition is a significant issue, citing the 1974 paper by Charles Butterworth that describes malnutrition as the "skeleton in the hospital closet." Dr. Pezzana explained that significant strides have been made in addressing malnutrition in Italy, supported by the Ministry of Health's educational programs. Piedmont exemplifies comprehensive care and innovative practices. Guidelines for food in hospitals, schools, and nursing homes have been implemented, and strategies for reducing food waste have been improved. He encouraged exploring new ideas and collaborations that integrate



The Turin ONCA Conference

June 6 & 7 2024

scientific knowledge with personal, local, and global perspectives to combat malnutrition with a transdisciplinary approach.

Empowering Health Through Nutritional Care: A Patient-Centric Journey of Progress (virtually)

Laura del Campo, Director of PAVO, the Italian Federation of Cancer Patient Organizations, oversees a large network of more than 300 associations that address all types of cancer and provide various services to cancer patients and their families. One of their working groups is specifically focused on nutrition. Laura begins by highlighting that in Italy, nearly 4 million people live after a cancer diagnosis, and over 20% of them do not survive due to severe malnutrition. This concern has driven the organization's efforts to empower cancer patients to seek appropriate nutritional support. Since 2016, they have been informing patients about the importance of nutritional support through national surveys on cancer patients' dietary practices and sources of nutritional advice, as well as by producing educational materials and booklets on nutrition for cancer patients. They also present an annual report to the Italian Parliament, highlighting issues and proposing solutions to improve nutritional care. This has led to the creation of important guidelines for nutritional care across Italy. Another crucial part of the Federation's work is training caregivers to provide essential knowledge and skills to support patients, including aspects of nutritional care. In conclusion, Laura explains that the organization's approach is based on collaboration between cancer patients, scientific institutions, and governmental bodies to create effective solutions for the nutritional needs of cancer patients.

Getting Grip on Nutritional Care at a National Level

Ugo Della Marta, General Director of the Directorate for Hygiene, Food Safety, and Nutrition of the Italian Ministry of Health. Della Marta begins by noting that, according to the WHO, Europe and Iran have the highest obesity and overweight rates, ranging from 38% to 47%. Italy ranks third in Europe, a major concern for the Mediterranean region. Increased income has led to greater access to food but also unhealthy dietary habits and chronic diseases. In Italy, progress has been made through initiatives like the 2017 establishment of the TaSiN (Technical Working Group on Nutritional Safety) which promotes healthy aging through nutrition. This group, comprising representatives from institutional and scientific sectors, develops guidelines and training programs for integrating nutrition assessments into elderly care. Dr. Della Marta highlights investments in research to better understand elderly nutritional needs and promote the Mediterranean diet as a healthy eating model. The Ministry of Health also focuses on promoting healthy, sustainable diets for children and adolescents through scientifically based projects in schools. Additionally, guidelines for collective catering in schools, hospitals, and healthcare settings aim to improve food service quality and prevent nutrition-related diseases. Dr. Della Marta concludes by affirming the ministry's commitment to promoting healthy diets and aging through collaboration among institutions, the scientific community, the food industry, and academia, all working towards comprehensive nutritional policies and health promotion strategies.



The Turin ONCA Conference

June 6 & 7 2024



Global Insights into Disease-Related Malnutrition: Understanding the Worldwide Impact

Francesco Branca (Virtually), Director, Department of Nutrition and Food Safety - World Health Organisation, begins his presentation by highlighting the analysis from the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation on global disease burdens, where dietary risks rank among the top ten risk factors, accounting for eight million deaths each year. When including the impact of malnutrition, such as high body mass index, overweight and obesity, an additional 25 million deaths occur annually. Furthermore, three million deaths are attributed to maternal and child malnutrition, including poor breastfeeding practices, resulting in a total that represents one-third of the global disease burden. The situation is even more severe when considering the disability-adjusted life years lost due to malnutrition. Given this data, Dr. Branca emphasizes the need for health systems to address nutritional disorders, which includes managing underweight conditions, preventing vitamin and mineral deficiencies, and offering counseling for behavioral changes related to breastfeeding and healthy diets. As Dr. Branca explains, a comprehensive package of essential nutrition services should be available at primary healthcare levels. However, the data shows that only one-third to one-half of the global population has access to these essential services. He also discusses how the WHO is advocating for policies that support healthy food procurement in public institutions, including hospitals, with the aim of ensuring that public food services promote healthy diets and thereby have a significant impact on public health.

Considering this, it becomes evident that achieving universal health coverage requires that everyone has access to quality nutrition services at all levels of care. By promoting breastfeeding, improving hospital nutrition, and implementing effective public food policies, as Dr. Branca asserts, we can make significant strides toward better global health outcomes.



SESSION 2: COLLABORATIVE ACTIONS ON NUTRITIONAL CARE AT A EUROPEAN LEVEL

Introduction by Prof Olle Ljungqvist: What we're aiming to achieve with the European Nutrition for Health Alliance is to take scientific research and translate it into effective policy. That's one of our main objectives. We all agree that under-nutrition needs to be addressed, and we believe that the EU health policy table is the appropriate venue for this discussion. To accomplish this, we collaborate with various stakeholders, including the European Commission. Key: effective communication and having the right people at the table. We have dedicated organizations that support this project and have been instrumental in its success. To create impact at the EU level, it is crucial to have a unified message from multiple countries. We engage in various activities, including EU projects like EU4Health and EU4Nutrition, and we participate in initiatives such as Healthy Aging.

Collaborative Initiatives and Declarations: Strengthening Partnerships in WHO Europe

Annemieke van Ginkel-Res, President of the European Federation the Associations of Dietitians (EFAD), presents the association, which is committed to a multidisciplinary approach, recognizing the importance of collaboration in advancing nutritional care. Key milestones include their membership in the European Nutrition Health Alliance, allowing collaboration at the EU level. Recently, they became a non-state expert member of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe, enabling attendance at meetings and presentation of position statements on primary care and nutritional care. A significant message they advocate is that every European citizen should have access to safe and appropriate nutritional care. In 2020, they partnered with ESPEN to strengthen collaboration and involve dietitians in guideline development. The 2022 Vienna Declaration asserts proper nutrition as a human right, a powerful document they promote across Europe. Additionally, the Budapest Resolution supports the right to nutritional care for all Europeans. They had productive meetings with the FAO and Stella Kyriakides, emphasizing the importance of their message. Despite numerous WHO documents on nutrition, these issues are often overlooked in regional meetings, necessitating their continued advocacy. Their work in Kazakhstan on primary care and in Tajikistan on capacity building underscores the need for tailored strategies for each country's health system. In conclusion, EFAD emphasizes integrated, multidisciplinary data for accurate diagnosis and effective patient care. Their unwavering message is that every European deserves safe and appropriate nutritional care, and they will persist in advocating for this right.

Rocco Barazzoni, President of the European Society for Clinical Nutrition and Metabolism (ESPEN) expressed gratitude for the invitation and emphasized the importance of collaboration between ESPEN and EFAD. He thanked Annemieke for highlighting this crucial aspect and noted the challenges involved in implementing effective partnerships. Barazzoni recounted ESPEN's efforts over the past five to six years to prioritize malnutrition and optimal nutritional care within the WHO framework. Initially, WHO focused primarily on undernutrition and poverty, neglecting the broader issue of



The Turin ONCA Conference

June 6 & 7 2024



disease-related malnutrition. ESPEN's strategy began at an obesity congress in Glasgow in 2019, leading to valuable connections with WHO Europe's Prevention of Non-Communicable Diseases Office. During the COVID-19 pandemic, these connections facilitated collaboration on nutritional care guidelines for patients, emphasizing the importance of screening, diagnosing, and treating malnutrition in clinical settings. ESPEN also contributed to WHO projects on obesity and tuberculosis nutrition, highlighting malnutrition's dual role as a risk factor and complication. ESPEN became a non-state actor with WHO Europe in September 2022, allowing them to submit statements on primary care nutrition and participate in international events. Barazzoni emphasized the need for government advocacy to elevate disease-related malnutrition on the WHO agenda, with Croatia playing a key role. Looking ahead, ESPEN aims to continue leveraging relationships and opportunities to advance nutritional care, building on the progress made at an upcoming plenary session in Milan.

Fostering Patient Advocacy: Catalysts for Advancing Nutritional Care Policies in the European Union

Tunde Koltai, a representative of the European Patients' Forum (EPF), emphasizes that she represents patients, who are the core of the healthcare system. Patients face various challenges while living with their diseases, so the aim is to foster collaboration with specialists, with a focus on nutritional status and health. Investing more in healthcare is crucial because a healthy population leads to greater productivity and increased tax contributions for the country. Raising awareness about malnutrition benefits everyone. Koltai advocates for using all educational channels to inform the public and professionals about malnutrition and undernutrition, from schools to high-level WHO committees. This includes updating websites, organizing informational sessions, and ensuring healthcare professionals are aware of the real-world implications of medical conditions. Furthermore, Koltai stresses the importance of learning from countries with successful practices, taking a proactive role in the policy agenda. This involves advocating for national nutrition policies, monitoring relevant indicators, and linking various aspects of the nutrition field, including agriculture, home nutrition, social care, and hospital care.

Uniting IF patients' voices - Are we ready to accept the challenge?

Sergio Settanni is a board member of the "un Filo per la Vita" association and father of a 15-year-old girl affected by intestinal failure (IF). He emphasized the importance of understanding malnutrition and ensuring proper care for those with IF. Recognizing malnutrition as a consequence of the condition is essential for timely diagnosis and effective treatment, ensuring consistent support across regions with the goal of providing high-quality care uniformly. Orphanet has classified IF as a rare disease in the European community. However, many EU member states have yet to enforce this classification, causing significant disparities in treatment and patient rights based on location. Patient



The Turin ONCA Conference

June 6 & 7 2024



associations were established to fill gaps where the health system and legislation were lacking. Their role has evolved to include advocacy for IF across various domains, engaging with politicians, policymakers, medical societies, and other stakeholders on a voluntary basis. As these associations matured, they shifted their focus from merely sharing strategies to emphasizing positive outcomes and best practices. Reframing IF from being seen as a cost to an area where effective treatment can lead to significant improvements became crucial. The association has collaborated with nine other organizations to address intestinal failure, creating a network to support and advance understanding and care for the condition.

Marek Lichota, Appetite for Life, a Crohn's disease patient and parent, shares their emotional journey of managing a chronic illness. After becoming dependent from the home treatment system due to complications, they gained significant experience in improving quality of life for others in similar situations. This led to the founding of "Appetite for Life" in Poland in 2005, an international association representing individuals with chronic intestinal failure. The organization aims to improve patients' quality of life and advocate for their needs by empowering, educating, supporting and uniting those with chronic intestinal failure and inflammatory bowel diseases. They organize educational activities like workshops and conferences on relevant topics, run informational campaigns, and strive to gain media attention for these issues. They have engaged with health institutions, making significant strides at national and EU levels. Their efforts include participating in a parliamentary committee focused on nutrition in oncology treatment. One rewarding aspect of their work is seeing the positive impact on patients' lives, such as celebrating the 40th anniversary of the first home parenteral nutrition (HPN) in Poland. They have also supported Ukrainian patients affected by the war, helping relocate individuals in need of care. Despite challenges, the initiative to create a structured legal alliance of patient organizations represents a significant step forward. The speaker emphasizes the importance of continued EU communication and collaboration, driven by passion and determination to make a difference in patients' lives.



SESSION 3: PAN-EUROPEAN GOOD PRACTICES IN POLICY SHAPING

Celebrating Triumphs: Acknowledging the Impact of Community Dietitians in Italy

Ersilia Troiano, Italian National Dietitians Association, is honored and grateful to the ONCA network, especially to Antonella Lezo, for this opportunity and extends special thanks to Chiara Perrone from the ASAND Specialist Group and the European Specialist Dietetic Network. She discusses the Budapest Resolution, endorsed by EFAD on October 21, 2022, which promotes global recognition of the right to access nutritional care. It urges European politicians to ensure access to appropriate nutritional care for all citizens. Primary care is crucial for early identification and management of malnutrition, as emphasized by ESPEN. The Italian Ministerial Decree No. 77/2022 aims to standardize the primary care network, integrate care priorities, promote preventive health measures and align with European standards. This model features community-based care centers, hospitals, and hospices, where dietitians play a vital role. Despite having 6,032 active dietitians, Italy needs an additional 600 in primary care. Recent legislation and practices in regions like Lombardy and Tuscany show progress. However, Italy must continue enhancing nutritional care standards and referral pathways.

Navigating Nutritional Policies in the UK: Valuable Lessons from Intestinal Failure Strategies

Simon Lal, Professor of Gastroenterology, discusses the challenges faced by patients with intestinal failure (IF) and outlines some of the UK's experiences and strategies to address these challenges. IF is a condition where the gut cannot absorb sufficient nutrients and fluids, necessitating intravenous feeding, known as parenteral nutrition (PN), which can be temporary or permanent. Managing IF often involves a central venous catheter, posing risks such as infections and blockages. Lal highlighted the variability in access to home parenteral nutrition (HPN) across countries. Countries like Brazil and Spain have relatively low levels of HPN access, the UK has intermediate levels, and the USA and Denmark have very high levels. This disparity indicates inequitable access to HPN for patients globally. In the 1970s and 80s, pioneers in the UK worked to establish national centers for managing severe IF, which led to the designation of Salford and St. Mark's Hospital as the primary centers for IF care. These centers have grown to accommodate the increasing number of patients and have developed other centers across the UK through a national procurement process. Salford's service has expanded from a small ward to a dedicated 21-bed unit for severe IF patients. Lal emphasized the importance of expanding services, supporting other centers through mentoring, complex case discussions and sharing best practices. Simon Lal and his team are working on revising UK quality standards to make them internationally relevant and to share their experiences globally, with the goal is to achieve equal standards of care for all European patients with IF by 2030 through initiatives like the ATLAS programme.



The Turin ONCA Conference

June 6 & 7 2024



Aligning Health: Nutritional Care Strategies in Pursuit of CVD Policy Objectives

Roberto Volpe, European Heart Network, discusses the role of nutrition in cardiovascular prevention and the challenges in this area. Many Europeans die before the age of 65, primarily from cancer, with nutrition playing a significant role in these statistics. One-third of cancer cases are related to nutrition and obesity, and dietary risks are the leading cause of cardiovascular diseases after smoking. Addressing dietary risks such as hypertension, hypercholesterolemia, diabetes, and obesity is crucial. One significant challenge is the high cost of healthy foods, such as fruits and vegetables, which increases from farm to market. Policies are needed to support farmers and make healthy food more affordable while also implementing taxes on unhealthy foods like soda and processed snacks. There has been progress in regulating trans fatty acids in the European Union. France has also implemented a soda tax, and there are ongoing discussions about similar measures in Italy. However, there is strong opposition from industries concerned about job losses due to these taxes. Food labeling is an effective tool for guiding consumers towards healthier choices. Systems like the Nutri-Score offer a simple, easy-to-understand rating for food products. However, the Nutri-Score system is still debated and needs improvement to address issues such as ultra-processed foods. It is necessary to continue building alliances with various organizations to strengthen efforts in nutritional care and cardiovascular disease prevention. This includes working with patient associations and exploring new strategies to improve public health.

Exploring Examples and Challenges in Nutritional Care Continuity

Alessandra Taraschi, General Medical Council, Province of Turin, discusses the role of General Practitioners (GPs) in Italy. GPs are freelance professionals affiliated with the national healthcare system, and their primary responsibilities include prevention, health promotion, managing acute and chronic conditions, and providing proactive care for chronic and vulnerable patients. Chronic diseases affect nearly 40% of the Italian population, with many of these conditions linked to nutritional issues. Effective management of chronic diseases often requires both medical treatment and lifestyle changes. Recent guidelines emphasize prevention and lifestyle modifications as key strategies for managing chronic diseases. For instance, the Diabetes Prevention Program demonstrates that lifestyle changes can delay or prevent the onset of type 2 diabetes. In Piedmont, an integrated management model has been implemented where GPs collaborate closely with specialists to manage conditions such as diabetes. This collaborative model has successfully reduced mortality from cardiovascular diseases and improved diabetes management. Looking ahead, the goal is to extend this model to other conditions, such as COPD, osteoporosis and celiac disease. Continuity in nutritional care is essential for managing chronic diseases and enhancing public health. The major effort is to integrate care models and preventive measures to achieve these improvements

The Turin ONCA Conference

June 6 & 7 2024

