

Editorial

An exceptional symposium



The SIP symposium 2011 proved to be a unique event on pain care in the EU. In previous years the event had 'merely' resulted in resolutions by

the respective associations, but without any political signals. This year, though, there was a clear political signal for the very first time – both from EU Health Commissioner John Dalli and from other EU parliamentarians. Now for Germany that might not be quite such a big deal, as politicians here have already recognized the significance of pain care. But – as became apparent at the "Societal Impact of Pain" (SIP) symposium in Brussels – other countries, particularly Eastern European ones, still lag behind in their care of pain patients. Eastern European associations made a desperate plea for EU intervention. Although that's unlikely to happen for the time being, a 'road map' at least highlights what needs to be done. For some countries this represents initial progress, for others it is an important signal to their governments.

Enjoy this special edition of KOMPASS!

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Chronic Pain

Things get moving in the EU Parliament

Brussels – The European Parliament has finally become active on the issue of 'pain': At this year's Societal Impact of Pain Symposium (SIP 2011) on 3 and 4 May, European MP Jim Higgins (IRE) endorsed the "Road Map for Action" to put „pain" on the health policy agenda.



European MP Jim Higgins (IRE) endorsed the Road Map for an improved treatment of chronic pain in Europe. © PAG

"The problem with pain is that you can't put it under a microscope or see it on an X-ray. But pain is there, and it is a reality for a large part of our population," Higgins explained during the symposium. "That's why we need to develop a general action plan for Europe. Our 'Road Map for Action' identifies the key political tasks for the European Union and its member states, and makes it clear just how urgent it is for Europe to put the societal impact of chronic pain on the health policy agenda."

Dr. Jiří Maštálka, Member of the European Parliament for the Czech Republic (CZ), shares that view: "Not only

does chronic pain have a negative effect on the quality of life of those concerned, it also burdens the economy of the respective country. As such, every national health system should move the topic of 'pain' right to the top of its list of priorities." The organisations which

signed the Road Map are using it to call on the EU and its member states to press ahead with improvements in the treatment of chronic pain.

The "Societal Impact of Pain – A Road Map for Action" requires the following from the European governments and institutions:

Experts and patients joined up at the EU Parliament. © PAG



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Over 300 participants gathered information about problems and approaches to pain treatment © PAG

1. Acknowledge that pain is an important factor limiting the quality of life and should be a top priority of the national health care system.
2. Activate patients, their family, relatives and care-givers through the availability of information and access to pain diagnosis and management.
3. Raise awareness of the medical, financial and social impact that pain and its management has on the patients, their family, care-givers, employers, and the healthcare system.
4. Raise awareness of the importance of prevention, diagnosis and management of pain amongst all healthcare professionals, notably through further education.
5. Strengthen pain research (basic science, clinical, epidemiological) as a priority in an EU framework programme and in equivalent research road maps at national and EU level, addressing the societal impact of pain and the burden of chronic pain on the health, social, and employment sectors.
6. Establish an EU platform for the exchange, comparison and benchmarking of best practices between member states on pain management and its impact on society.



Dr. Jiří Maštálka, (right), member of the European Parliament and SIP patron, and Giustino Varrassi, former President of the EFIC, exchange views. © PAG

7. Use the EU platform to monitor trends in pain management, services, and outcomes, and provide guidelines to harmonize effective levels of pain management to improve the quality of life of European citizens.

“We can take this European Road Map from Brussels back to Germany and thus show politicians that there is a real need to do something about ‘pain’ and its societal impact,” commented Professor Michael Zenz, former



Professor Rolf-Detlef Treede (l.) and Professor Michael Zenz recognize that there is still a lot of catching up to do as regards pain care in Germany. © PAG

President of the German Association for the Study of Pain (DGSS) and current EFIC councillor. As he sees it, it is “an embarrassment for the richest country in Europe” that an “amorphous mass like the European Parliament” can lead the way whilst in Germany nothing is happening.

“Across the whole of Europe, the right to get access to pain treatment must be statutory,” says Professor Rolf-Detlef Treede, another former DGSS President.

The Road Map is to be fully drafted and handed over to the European Members of Parliament by the end of the year at the latest.

The final outcome then remains to be seen. Professor Zenz, a medical practitioner, is already convinced that the EU can only send 'signals' to the individual governments. Actual implementations will have to be done by the countries themselves. In the case of Germany, Zenz believes that pain treatment



> The document „The Societal Impact of Pain – A Road Map for Action“ can be found under: www.EFIC.org; see at „congress & initiatives“

> Further information to the Symposium „Societal Impact of Pain“ can be found under: www.SIP-Meeting.org



Dr. Milan Cabrnock, member of the European Parliament and patron of the Symposium SIP 2011. © PAG

should be introduced as the 14th interdisciplinary subject in the Medical Licensure Act, and that improved regulations on further education, as well as pain prevention and pain therapy are necessary.

Professor Treede sees a first opportunity for a clear stance on chronic pain in the patient rights and protection laws: “The right to get access to pain therapy and palliative medicine must be integrated into German law,” says Treede. ■

Background

On 3 and 4 May 2011, nearly 300 European health care stakeholders from more than 30 countries met in the European Parliament to discuss the „Societal Impact of Pain“ (SIP 2011). The symposium was endorsed by 85 national and international organisations and institutions and supported by all three European institutions, the EU Parliament, the EU Commission and the EU Council. Kindly co-hosted at the European Parliament by Dr Jiří Maštálka MEP and Dr Milan Cabrnock MEP it provided a platform for health care professionals and specialists, as well as representatives of health authorities, pain advocacy groups, politicians, regulators and budget holders.

Dalli: Pain will become a problem for health systems

Brussels – Chronic pain represents an ‘enormous challenge’ for state health systems of European Union member countries. EU Health Commissioner John Dalli underlined this.

On the occasion of the “Societal Impact of Pain 2011” (SIP) symposium within the premises of the European Parliament in Brussels, he talked about the demographic

change in Europe. The number of elderly people will rise in all EU member states, and chronic pain will be “an increasingly important problem” in future, said Dalli.

The Health Commissioner made it clear that this is not merely a question of challenges for the health policy of the EU and its member countries, but also an issue of “significant economic importance”. Politicians must recognize this and adapt accordingly, Dalli concluded. ■



John Dalli, European Union Health Commissioner: “We have to learn to understand pain better and manage it correctly.” © PAG

Summary

Session and workshop topics

Brussels – Pain, pain care, and the impact on society were at the focus of the two-day SIP symposium. Here is a summary of the plenary sessions and workshops.

The plenary sessions

Giustino Varrassi, President of the SIP symposium, opened the first plenary session in the afternoon of 3 May together with parliamentarians Dr. Jiri Maštálka, MEP and Dr. Milan Carbnoc, both MEPs.

Dalli made it clear that pain represents a considerable challenge to health systems and has an equally enormous economic significance.

In the session moderated by Mary Baker, President of the European Federation of Neurological Associations (EFNA), medical practiti-

ling of pain. Various representatives from patient organisations, health insurance companies, the Catholic Church, and health economists shared their latest findings and ideas on the topic.



EU parliamentarian Anna Rosbach closely follows the explanations of the pain experts © PAG



Dr. Jiří Maštálka, member of the European Parliament and SIP patron, EU Health Commissioner John Dalli, and Giustino Varrassi, President of EFIC (from the left). © PAG

They were joined by EU commissioner John Dalli, responsible for health and consumer policy.

oners commented on pain care. Professor Hans G. Kress, EFIC President, illustrated the relevance of pain in the population and its recognition as a disease in its own right.

Ceri Phillips from the College of Human and Health Sciences at Swansea University, explained the economic significance of pain and its treatment, and Guido Fanelli, Presidente Commissione Ministeriale sulla terapia del dolore, talked about pain care from a national perspective.

In the afternoon, chair Anna Rosbach, MEP for Denmark, moved the focus onto day-to-day hand-

In the afternoon plenary session on 4 May, Timothy Steiner (“Lifting the Burden”) presented the WHO Atlas of Headache Disorders (see also page 6).

Patricia Reilly, member of the cabinet of Máire Geoghegan-Quinn, EU Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science, and Isabel de la Mata, Principal Advisor of the EU Commission with a special interest in public health, talked about pain as a problem for people within the European Union, and ways to improve the situation.



Timothy Steiner, Lifting the Burden, presents the WHO Atlas of Headache Disorders. © PAG



The pain experts engaged in numerous lively discussions © PAG

Six parallel workshops

Workshop 1

The first of six simultaneous workshops on the morning of the second day on 4 May dealt with "Consumers, costs or patients", and was chaired by Antigoni Papadopoulou, MEP from Cyprus. The workshop investigated the requirements of and inequalities in pain treatment from a consumer perspective, particularly in view of demographic change.



The issue of pain treatment was also discussed in the evening © EFIC

Workshop 2

Workshop 2 focussed on the political actions to improve pain care, resulting in the political "Road Map for Action" as a fundamental consensus document. Seven policies of 'pain management' highlight the political issues which the EU member states must work on to substantially improve the future of pain care in Europe.

Workshop 3

The third workshop entitled "Pain – Numbers, facts and figures" invited speakers to pre-



Workshops and plenary sessions provided in-depth explorations of the problems related to pain treatment © EFIC

sent evidence-based initiatives on pain treatment and initial analyses of these projects. Romanian parliamentarian Cristian Silviu Buşoi acted as Chair. Jürgen Schefflein from the DG SANCO C4-Health Determinants EU Commission provided some insights into how the EU Commission handles health indicators.

Workshop 4

Two Irish MEPs, Marian Harkin und Gay Mitchell, chaired workshop no. 4 on "Healthy aging; Pain, ethics and society", with a focus on palliative care. The aging population and healthy aging from the viewpoint of different interest groups, including patients, their families, and professional and voluntary care staff were the core topics.

Workshop 5

Workshop 5 delivered important findings and resulted in stimulating discussions on how best practice in pain management could be, and reflected on how currently available data on effective pain treatment options could be used

as a benchmark for the entire European Union.

Workshop 6

The sixth workshop, chaired by Mary Honeyball, MEP from the United Kingdom, concentrated on future scenarios of pain care, the possibilities and

promises harboured by evidence-based medicine, and issues of personalised or stratified medicine in pain research. Philippe Cupers, European Commission Directorate General for Research and Innovation, provided insights into a variety of approaches from the viewpoint of the EU and national public authorities and ministries. WHO representative Willem Scholten addressed the problem of limited access to pain care for patients within the EU. ■



Scientific findings required the participants' full attention © PAG

The WHO Atlas of Headache Disorders

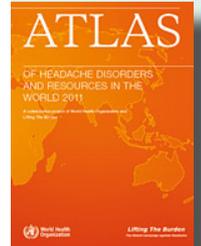
Migraine is widespread in Europe

Brussels – In Europe, 14.9 percent of the population suffer from migraine. This was revealed in the “Atlas of headache disorders and resources in the world 2011” by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the global campaign against headache disorders “Lifting the Burden”.

Worldwide, the number of migraine sufferers lies mostly above 10 percent (America 10.6%, South-east-Asia 10.9%, West Pacific countries 10.4%), with the exception of Africa (4%) and the eastern Mediterranean countries (6.8%). “Migraine is not merely a headache, but a serious medical condition that involves significant limitations to a person’s quality of

life,” said Timothy Steiner of “Lifting the Burden” on the occasion of the “Societal Impact of Pain” symposium. He pointed out that education on headache disorders is being greatly neglected by almost all health systems around the world, although around 30 percent of the population visit a doctor with such ailments. Poor training is the “core problem that

prevents good treatment of headache disorders,” the Atlas summarizes. Criticism was voiced that knowledge transfer dealing with headache disorders is limited to around four hours at university-level institutions. “Medical practitioners leave university knowing practically nothing about a disorder on which many patients often seek consultation,” Steiner resumed. Above all, he called for improved training of doctors, for which there also has to be a definite “political will”. As a health professional, Steiner hopes that the Atlas of Headache Disorders – due to be distributed to all European governments – will serve as a “tool for raising awareness”. ■



> The „Atlas of headache disorders and resources in the world 2011“ for download under the following address: www.who.int/mental_health/management/atlas_headache_disorders/en/index.html

Comment

In the public focus

Pain and pain care sooner or later affect every one of us, whether directly or through a person close to us. Nevertheless, chronic pain is still one of the most neglected and least treated ailments in our society. Now though, the issue of ‘pain’ has managed to move into the focus of public attention. Under the Hungarian Presidency of the EU Council, the societal impact of pain was at the focus of the two-day symposium of the same name (SIP 2011) at the European Parliament in Brussels. A wide-ranging audience from over 30 countries and more than 300 representatives from politics, health services, academia, and patient associations, along with high-ranking officials from both the EU Parliament and the EU

commission, highlighted the different points of view on the issue of ‘pain’.

The European Federation of IASP Chapters (EFIC®) was responsible for the scientific agenda, which was endorsed by 85 national and international organisations and institutions.

The organisation of such a major event with so many different international parties in the European Parliament presented a significant challenge, and I am proud to report that Grünenthal GmbH excelled in both the logistics and the organisation. In particular it was this wide spectrum of participants that made the meeting such a unique event.

As EU Health Commissioner John Dalli commented: “We need to realise that demographic change

and our continuously aging society will lead to the issue of ‘pain’ becoming ever more significant. As such, we need to gain a better understanding of ‘pain’ and learn to manage it correctly.” I therefore call upon all parties to involve their respective national representatives and decision makers, and pass on the proverbial torch. I look forward to working with you on this!

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