



For the third time MEPs call upon the Commission for action on malnourished patients

Vote follows recognition of the importance of tackling malnutrition by the European Partnership for Action Against Cancer

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Members of the European Parliament's Environment, Health and Food Safety committee this week voted for the third time for the European Commission to fund research and guidelines for nutritional support to tackle Europe's 'silent killer', malnutrition.

Professor Olle Ljungqvist, Professor of Surgery at Örebro University & Karolinska Institutet Sweden and chair of the European Nutrition for Health Alliance (ENHA) said: "Malnutrition has an adverse impact on people's health and wellbeing and represents a healthcare and societal cost equal to that of obesity. Malnutrition affects up to 50% of cancer patients and we need to ensure that nutritional care guidelines are updated to reflect the evidence base and are integrated into guidelines."

Mr Peterle commented: "The vote on the report on Action against Cancer: A European Partnership is a significant step forward in building support for a much needed holistic approach at EU level. Nutrition is now widely recognised by the European Parliament as an important element both in preventing cancer and treating malnutrition associated with cancer. It is vital that Europe develops guidelines on nutritional support for cancer patients for social and health care professionals across Europe."

The vote follows the recent invitation of both the European Nutrition for Health Alliance (ENHA) and European Society for Clinical Nutrition and Metabolism (ESPEN) to be partners in the European Partnership for Action Against Cancer. The purpose of the Partnership is to support Member States and other stakeholders in their efforts to tackle cancer more efficiently by providing a framework for identifying and sharing information, capacity and expertise in cancer prevention and control.

The vote reinforces the message sent by the European Parliament in two reports in 2008 (on the EU's Nutrition and Health Strategies respectively) urging the Commission 'to take a more holistic approach to nutrition and make malnutrition, alongside obesity, a key priority in the field of health, incorporating it wherever possible into EU-funded research, education and health promotion initiatives and EU-level partnerships'.

"As Europe faces an ageing population, with increasing numbers of people over 70, the challenge will grow. The EU27 must look to create coherent policies for nutritional support across health and social care systems," said Professor Ljungqvist.

About ENHA

ENHA is a group of stakeholders from across the health arena, united in an effort to raise awareness of the urgency of addressing the issue of malnutrition which is estimated to affect up to 5% of the general population, 40% of hospitalised patients and up to 60% of people in care homes (see www.european-nutrition.org). The Alliance is chaired by Professor Olle Ljungqvist, Chair of the European Society for Clinical Nutrition and Metabolism (ESPEN).

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