



On the occasion of World Cancer Day

PRESS RELEASE

The AECC warns of the need to accompany 30,000 cancer patients who are alone

- **There is a new social reality marked mainly by the aging population, an increasing number of cancer patients, and a greater population at risk of isolation and loneliness**
- **The AECC-Spanish Association Against Cancer demands the integration of volunteering in the national health system as well as equity in access to this service**
- **Experts recommend to increase the presence of volunteers to accompany and support cancer patients and their families**
- **The AECC volunteer is qualified and is part of a highly organized structure, which includes ongoing training and evaluation.**
- **The fifth edition of the Forum Against Cancer focuses on the value of the volunteers accompanying patients and their families for a comprehensive quality cancer care**

Madrid, 3rd February 2016. The support and assistance to people suffering from cancer done by volunteers captured the focus of the fifth edition of the Forum Against Cancer organized every year by the AECC-Spanish Association Against Cancer under the World Cancer Day, which takes place on 4th February.

Under the presidency of Her Majesty the Queen of Spain, President of Honour of the AECC and the AECC Scientific Foundation, this high level event counted on the participation of Alfonso Alonso, Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality, and Tezer Kutluk, President of the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC), as well as health professionals, cancer policy makers, patients and volunteers who discussed the current situation of volunteering and the need to improve cancer care including this service for a real quality outreach.

The debates focused on how to move forward to integrate the volunteering service as an element of quality within the comprehensive health and social care in the oncology field. This year we had the opportunity to learn from models of developing volunteering services outside Spain such as the Volunteering Programme run by Macmillan Cancer Support, which was described in the Forum by Melanie Merrill, Volunteering Programme Manager for Quality.

Her Majesty the Queen, who took part in this event as an "active and engaged listener" stressed that this Forum Against Cancer "aims to open an in depth debate about one specific issue each year of those that are the core mission of the Spanish Association Against Cancer this is, generally speaking, to try that people with cancer and their families have a better quality of life."

In this sense, as permanent President of Honour of the AECC and the AECC Scientific Foundation, Her Majesty the Queen emphasized the value of the volunteering service as "an essential part of the integrated approach through which the Association addresses

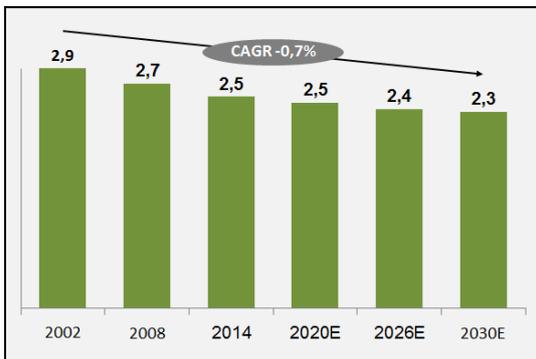
cancer", highlighting "it means to accompany, inform, support those who need it in many different ways", and also "wanting to be a volunteer is important but that decision needs to be part of a well organized and balanced system to be effective and really of help for cancer patients".

Isabel Oriol, President of the AECC and the AECC Scientific Foundation said: "We want to show the volunteering service value to meet social needs when accompanying patients and families, and to demand their integration into the social and health system as an indicator of quality and wellness for people who need it."

Cancer affects all aspects of the patient, and has a clear social dimension with increasing impact in several areas (work, economic, social ...).

We are also facing a new social context marked by the aging population and an increasing number of cancer patients. Today in Spain there are 29,637 cancer patients, older than 65 years of age, living alone, and it is expected that this figure will be considerably higher in the coming years. In addition, the family is becoming smaller and more fragmented, and there is a growing number of people at risk of isolation and loneliness. Furthermore the labour market situation makes it difficult for the family to perform the traditional family role as carers.

Given this facts, the AECC has set its own challenges for the coming years, such as to ensure the volunteering work as a part of the comprehensive care to the patient and family, demanding equal access to volunteering services, and expand the integration model beyond hospitals allowing greater proximity to wherever the cancer patient may be.



Average family size/ number of people
Source: INE



Cancer incidence and Spanish population

AECC volunteering service, qualified and with ongoing training

The Spanish Association Against Cancer has 20,298 volunteers, this means that 2 out of 100 volunteers of the Third Sector of Social Action are AECC's. A total of 5,731 of them provide care to patient and family, and have accompanied 37,1687 people in 2015.

The standard profile of AECC volunteers is female (89%) with a mean age of 57 years, with a university or secondary education (67%), and with an average length of services of 5 years.

Almost all the support and companionship action of the AECC volunteers take place in hospitals. There are 163 hospitals where the AECC develops those activities all over Spain

The AECC volunteering teams are formed by qualified volunteers, and are part of a highly organized structure, which includes a thorough selection process, ongoing training, monitoring and evaluation of their work. The AECC has provided volunteers with more than 900 courses involving 46,710 training hours.



The AECC assesses in-house and regularly the patients and health professionals' satisfaction with this service as part of the volunteer management process, this allows the organization to improve the process of training and programme monitoring. According to recent data (January 2016), 96% of cancer patients showed high levels of satisfaction, and support provided by AECC volunteers in hospitals reached an average score of 4.61 out of 5 (being 1 the lowest satisfaction and 5 the highest satisfaction). The most useful aspects of the volunteers work mentioned by patients were emotional support, assistance and entertainment.

As per health professionals, including nurses, medical specialists and nursing assistants, they also showed high levels of satisfaction with the AECC volunteering programme in hospitals.

According to the Report of Beneficiary Satisfaction with the AECC Volunteering Programme 2016, over 80% of patients and family acknowledged the work of the AECC volunteers as very positive, and 84% of patients and 83% of family members would recommend contact with these volunteers.

Likewise, the report showed also the willingness of health professionals to recommend the volunteering service, 64% of health professionals would recommend the AECC volunteers to cancer patients and families.

Some general information on volunteering

- Volunteering is understood as the set of general interest activities carried out by individuals who help to improve the quality of life of others and the society and to protect and preserve the environment.
- It is an indicator of the quality of the social and healthcare system.
- In Spain, there are around 1.3 million volunteers in the Third Sector of Social Action and the economic contribution of volunteers rises to 3915 million Euros, representing 1.5% of GDP.

Spanish Association Against Cancer (AECC), 62 years committed against Cancer

AECC is a private NPO (nonprofit organization), declared of public interest that has been working against Cancer for the last 62 years. It comprises patients and their families, as well as volunteers and professionals who work together in order to not only accompany cancer patients and their families, but also to provide information and funding research projects which might lead to better diagnosis and treatment. To promote high quality research is a priority for AECC. With an amount of 32 million Euros since 2010, it is nowadays the private organization that provides most funds to the research of cancer in Spain.

AECC, through its Scientific Foundation, gathers the social demand on research against cancer; funding social and scientific research programmes by means of public calls for tenders. Those programmes are focused on finding scientific developments with the aim of improving the future of those suffering from cancer and their relatives; securing this type of scientific research in Spain and sharing all the achievements. AECC's Scientific Foundation has AENOR Quality certification.



Formed by 52 provincial delegations and present in more than 2.000 Spanish cities, AECC carries out its mission with the help of more than 20,000 volunteers and 700 employees united by a philosophy of collaboration with Health authorities, scientific institutions and other organizations sharing the same aim. All their work is done taking into account the following values: help, independence, professionalism, transparency, dynamism and unity. AECC is an NGO certified by the foundation *Fundación Lealtad*. AECC has tended more than 400.000 persons affected by this disease in 2015.

If you wish to read more about AECC, please click [here](#).

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