

First ever European Index of pancreatic cancer care: early detection key to saving lives

Malta should train doctors to detect cancer early!

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The first ever comparison of pancreatic cancer treatment in Europe shows that most countries do not pay enough attention to the disease. In spite of causing almost as many deaths as breast cancer, pancreatic cancer is neglected by healthcare providers. In 4 out of 5 countries, treatment outcome data are not monitored and there is no agreed best practice. This is also the case in Malta. This is demonstrated through the Euro Pancreatic Cancer Index (EPCI), published today by the Sweden-based research organisation Health Consumer Powerhouse (HCP).



- Malta should focus on the very basics in pancreatic cancer care: training doctors to detect the cancer early and monitor basic treatment data, says Dr. Arne Bjornberg, head of the HCP Index production. Poor documentation hinders efficient cancer care. In Malta, the lack of reporting is even worse than in neighbouring countries, which make assessments futile. I am afraid that such negligence causes the death of Maltese patients.

Pancreatic cancer has a deserved reputation as a 'silent killer'. The cancer is generally detected too late, which makes treatment almost impossible. Doctors need better training to detect the disease early. It is the fourth largest cause of cancer deaths in the EU, killing more than 100 000 Europeans every year. Unlike for other cancers, this number is rising. Most people diagnosed with pancreatic cancer will die within the first year of diagnosis.

Despite the burden posed by the disease, most countries have no best practice for treatment. 4 out of 5 countries cannot present treatment outcomes data. The ECPI shows that chances of survival are twice as high in the best performing European countries, compared to those with the weakest performance.

- The overall picture is far from bright, but there are fore-runners in pancreatic cancer treatment, explains Ann-Marie Yazbeck, EPCI project manager. The Netherlands, Denmark, France and Ireland are good examples. Doctors seem more aware of the disease, and treatment outcomes are comparatively well monitored and documented. What is encouraging is that we can identify strategic steps towards progress. Monitoring and documentation of pancreatic cancer treatment are components where Malta needs to improve significantly.

Need for best practice

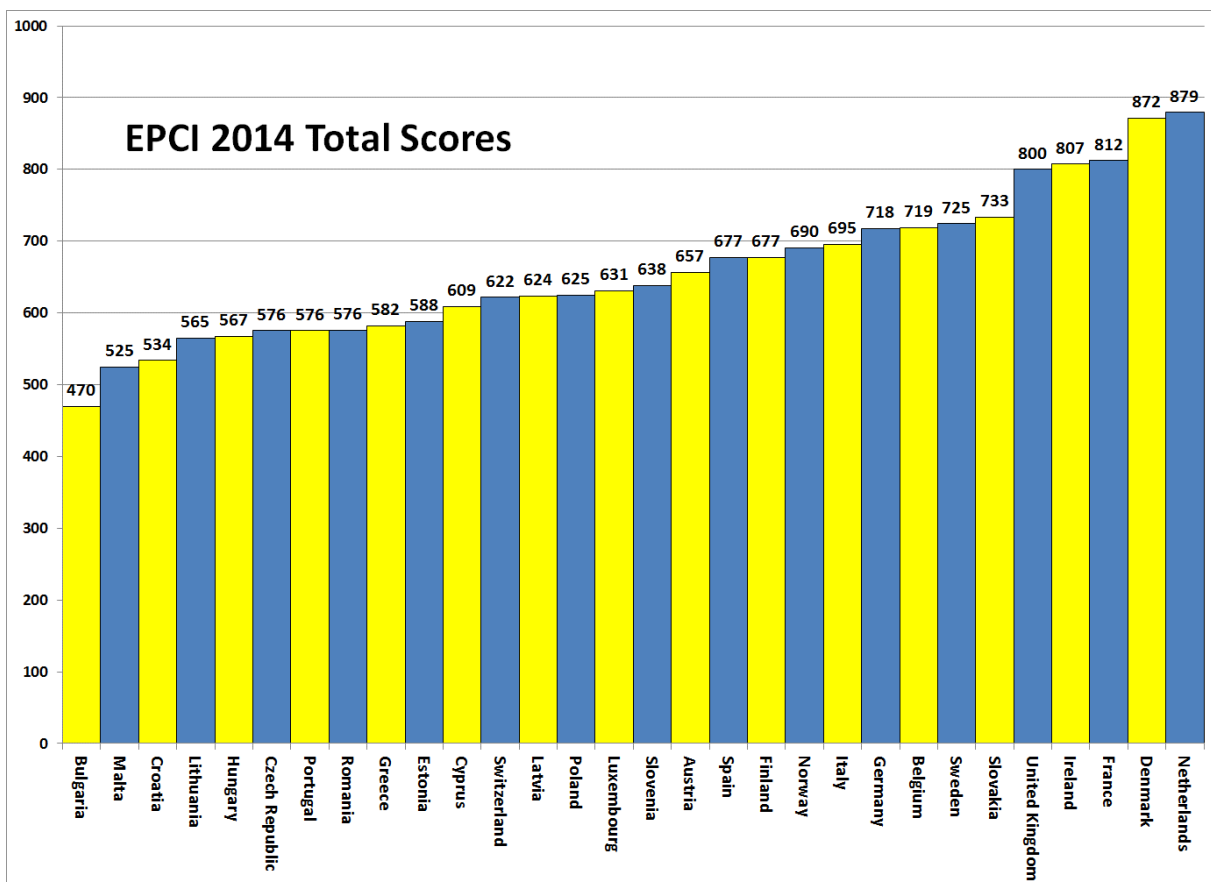
The Index points to pillars for potential pan-European best practice in pancreatic cancer care:

- **Primary care doctors trained to be aware of pancreatic cancer and how to recognize the combination of vague symptoms.**
- **Early detection is absolutely essential to allow efficient treatment.**
- **Rapid access to specialist diagnosis and surgery.**
- **Treatment outcomes have to be monitored and documented in a systematic, easily available way.**
- **Patient information about treatment options, with lists of certified pancreatic cancer surgeons and cross-border care opportunities.**

The Index – the first ever comparison of pancreatic cancer care in Europe – covers the following areas, using 30 indicators: patient rights, information and accessibility to care, prevention, treatment outcomes, diagnostics, pharmaceuticals and palliative care.

As the EPCI country benchmark shows there is a wide spread of Index outcomes, with an unusual mix of high- and medium income countries in the upper half of the Index rank.

The Netherlands come out top (as in many other HCP Indexes) with 879 of a possible 1000 points, followed by Denmark (872), France (812), Ireland (807) and the United Kingdom in a decent 5th position (800), in spite of having some of the worst survival rates in Europe. Malta (525) is 29th.



The full EPCI presentation, with the report, matrix and individual media releases for 30 countries, is available for free at www.healthpowerhouse.com. Please quote the source when using the material.

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For more information about the Euro Pancreatic Cancer Index and the Health Consumer Powerhouse by visiting the [Health Consumer Powerhouse website](http://www.healthpowerhouse.com) or contact us at info@healthpowerhouse.com. You can follow us on Facebook and Twitter: @HCPhealthindex.