

# JOINT LETTER ON COVID-19 AND CANCER



Dear

The COVID-19 pandemic has shaken our world and health systems and has had a major impact on people living with other diseases, especially cancer. We recognize that this impact goes well beyond cancer screening and care; however, we do want to raise some of the issues we have observed in our community.

Prior to the pandemic, death rates in some types of cancer had started to stabilise or even decrease as patients took a more active role in primary and secondary prevention and their own care, while cancer services improved and more treatments became available.<sup>1,2</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic has severely disrupted cancer detection and care services globally<sup>3</sup>: 2020 saw an approximately 40 per cent drop in diagnoses of cancer<sup>4</sup>. A recent study published in the BMJ journal demonstrated that delays to treatment can have a detrimental effect.<sup>5</sup>

We recognise that healthcare systems are under unprecedented pressure due to the COVID-19 pandemic and that the global crisis has not ended yet, but the data show us that we need to take action to actively address the issues in cancer care if we are to continue improving outcomes.

We, cancer-focused organisations, are ready to support governments in the effort to help cancer patients globally. To improve the situation for cancer patients, governments should:

**1) *Ensure that patients can access diagnosis and treatment safely***

Health systems should design COVID-secure pathways so that services for cancer patients can remain open and, where possible, provide alternative treatment modalities, such as home chemotherapy if both the treating provider and patient agree to help shield patients. Health authorities should communicate the range of actions that have been taken to allay patients' fears about COVID-19 and their condition, including appropriate measures to tackle cancer-related complications, such as cancer-associated thrombosis, cardiovascular diseases, mental health, pain, malnutrition and more.<sup>1</sup> Screening, assessment programmes and other means of diagnosing cancer early must also be restored and supported, as well as efforts to raise awareness of these programmes.

**2) *Identify the impact of the pandemic on cancer services and design services to mitigate this***

This means collecting and analysing data on the patients who were not diagnosed in 2020, modelling the likely additional demand for services due to missed diagnoses and appointments. In addition, it means investing in the workforce and physical capacity to meet this need, given the likely increase in the number of patients diagnosed at a late stage. We already have some analysed data available and we are willing to provide you with all relevant documentations.

**3) *Resource cancer services properly and safely for the long term***

Patients must be at the centre as action is taken to rebuild and improve cancer services. This means efforts to increase multi-disciplinary care, to treat cancer and related symptoms (as described above). Early diagnosis of cancer needs to be accelerated and the uptake of innovation in cancer care and treatment must happen at pace and scale to overcome the setbacks to progress



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experienced in 2020. Every effort should be made to ensure that cancer services are not disrupted by any future austerity measures, recognizing that spending on cancer has been stable for decades.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the potential effects of COVID-19 on cancer care could be long term and not only be limited to this year/during the pandemic due to upstaging and workforce resiliency. We are ready to collaborate with you to uplift the cancer care in your country with our resources and expertise.

Today, we want all governments to make a difference by saying:

“I am committed, and I will invest in prevention, early diagnosis and treatment of cancer.”

We, the signatories of this letter, are expressing an interest to collaborate with governments to improve the situation of cancer patients.

Signed

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Martine Wirtz  
Psychologist  
A heart for cancer sick children



Flori Degrassi  
A.N.D.O.S. onlus Nazionale  
A.N.D.O.S. onlus Nazionale



Radu Ianovici  
Economist  
ABC Suceava

Ornella Campanella  
President  
aBRCADabra Italian advocacy BRCA carriers



Jose Francisco Antunes Rodrigues  
President  
AC RIM Associação de Cancro do  
Rim de Portugal



Antonia Palmer; Kathy Motton  
Director ; Secretary  
Ac2orn: Advocacy for Canadian  
Childhood Oncology Research  
Network



James Burt  
EVP - EMENA  
Accord Healthcare



Liolio Kolypera  
President of the Board  
Achaia's Association of Women  
with Breast Cancer "ALMA ZOIS"  
(West Greece)



Mariano Votta  
Director of Active Citizenship  
Network, Head of EU Affairs  
Active Citizenship Network/  
Cittadinanzattiva



Nicoletta Cerana  
Chairwoman  
Acto Alleanza contro il Tumore  
Ovarico Onlus



Fatima Cardoso  
President  
Advanced Breast Cancer Global  
Alliance



Paul Opoku Agyemang  
Executive Director  
African Cancer Organisation



Verna Brackett  
Administrative and Finance Officer  
African Caribbean Leukaemia Trust  
(ACLT)



Giorgio Lo Iacono  
MD - International Liaison Officer  
ALCASE Italia



Agata Polińska  
Vice President  
Alivia- FUNDACJA ONKOLOGICZNA



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Eduardo Pisani  
CEO  
All.Can International



Paul Graf  
Chairman  
Antwerp Association for  
Gelaryngectomers-VZW



Jana Koželská  
předsedkyně  
ARCUS - onko centrum, z.s.



Helga Thurnher  
Chairperson  
Alliance of oncological patient  
organizations (Austria)

Paul Graf  
Chairman  
Antwerpse Vereniging voor  
Gelaryngectomeerden-vzw



Mary Vella  
President  
Arthritis and Rheumatism  
Association Malta-VO/0425



Marta Kostrová  
NatRep for ED and ECPC  
Alliance of Women with Breast  
Cancer

Evgenia Aleksandrova  
Chairwoman  
APOZ and Friends



Carlos Castro  
President  
Asociacion ALE, IAP



Martin Zanni  
Head Marketing Hematology /  
Oncology  
AMGEN Europe

Dr. Dégi László Csaba  
President  
APSCO



Charo Hierro Racionero  
President ASACO  
Asociación de Afectados por  
Cáncer de Ovario (ASACO)



Helen Morement  
CEO  
AMMF - The Cholangiocarcinoma  
Charity

Sami Khatib MD (Jordan)  
AMAAC Secretary General  
Arab Medical Association Against  
Cancer (AMAAC)



César Comuñas Alfaro  
Secretario  
Asociación de Cáncer de Próstata  
ANCAP



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Begoña Barragan  
President  
Asociación Española de Afectados  
por Linfoma, Mieloma y Leucemia  
(AEAL)



Alexandre Lourenço  
President  
Associação Portuguesa de  
Administradores Hospitalares  
(APAH)



Krista Nelson, MSW, LCSW, OSW-C,  
FAOSW  
President  
Association of Community Cancer  
Centers (ACCC)



Alejandra de Cima  
Founder and President  
Asociación Mexicana contra el  
Cáncer de Mama, A.C. (Fundación  
CIMA)



Joaquim da Cruz Domingos  
President  
Associação Portuguesa de Doentes  
da Próstata



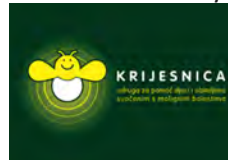
Savo Pilipovic  
President of Association  
Association of melanoma patients



Alina Patrahau  
President & CEO  
ASOCIATIA DARUIESTE ARIPI



Mihael Severinac  
Project Assistant  
Association Firefly



Ümit Dereli  
Secretary General  
Association of Research-Based  
Pharmaceutical Companies (AIFD)



Anka Mateescu  
Vice President  
Asociația Română împotriva  
Leucemiei



Karen E. Knudsen, MBA, PhD  
President  
Association of American Cancer  
Institutes



Puya Dehgani-Mobaraki  
President  
Associazione "Naso Sano"



Joan Puente Ortés  
Presidente  
AsPaFa Cáncer Renal



Minna Anttonen  
Executive Director  
Association of Cancer Patients in  
Finland



Roberto Maroldi  
Full Professor of Radiology - Head,  
Dept. of Diagnostic Imaging ·  
University of Brescia  
Associazione Italiana di Oncologia  
Cervico Cefalica





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Giordano Beretta  
AIOM President  
Associazione Italiana di Oncologia  
Medica (AIOM)



Marco Rossi  
MD Professor  
Associazione Oncologica Pisana  
Piero Trivella



Dr. Svetlana Kobina, M.D. PhD  
Head of Global Oncology Medical  
Affairs  
Bayer Pharmaceuticals



dott.ssa Mariuccia Franzoni  
Logopedista  
Associazione Italiana  
Laringectomizzati OdV (AILAR)



Edoardo Fiorini  
President  
Associazione PaLiNUro APS



Siobhán Freaney  
Founder  
Being Dense (Beingdense.com)



Giovanna Niero  
restorer  
Associazione Italiana Malati di  
Melanoma e tumori della pelle  
A.I.Ma.Me.



Mr Dirk Kosche  
President, Established Markets  
Astellas Pharma Europe Ltd



Rachel Giles  
Chair  
Belangenvereniging VHL (Dutch  
VHL Organisation)



Filippo La Torre  
MEDICO CHIRURGO  
Associazione Italiana Stomizzati  
AISTOM- ODV



David Fredrickson  
Executive Vice-President,  
Oncology Business Unit  
AstraZeneca



Nicole smith  
President/Founder  
Bella Lisa Pancreatic Cancer  
Foundation



Ivana Truccolo  
President  
Associazione Nazionale Guariti O  
Lungoviventi Oncologici - ANGOLO  
ODV



Luigi Antoniazzi  
VP Europe, Clinical Nutrition  
Baxter



Andrea Maddox-Smith  
CEO  
Bladder Cancer Advocacy Network



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Anthony Moore  
Director  
Bladder Cancer Australia Charity  
Foundation



Pauwels Andre  
Vice President  
BorstkankerMAN vzw



Shirley Bianca L. Müsseler  
Advisor  
BRESO Breast Surgeon  
Certification



Dr Stephanie Demkiw  
Cofounder and Chair  
Bladder Cancer Awareness  
Australia



Dr Helen Bulbeck  
Director of policy and services  
Brainstrust - the brain cancer  
people.



Emmanuel Chantelot  
Executive Director, Policy &  
Government Affairs Europe  
Miryah Morris  
Director, Global Advocacy,  
Oncology  
Bristol Myers Squibb

Ferg Devins  
Survivor and Volunteer Chair of  
the Board  
Bladder Cancer Canada



Aline Lauda Freitas Chaves  
President  
Brazilian Group of Head and Neck  
Cancer



Anastasios Kanatas  
Professor in Oral and Maxillofacial  
Surgery  
British Association of Head and  
Neck Oncologists

Francesco Di Marco  
Head of Therapeutic Area  
Oncology  
Boehringer Ingelheim



Cristina Guerrero Paez  
Director  
Breast Cancer Organisation



Patricia Calloud de Faudeur  
President  
Borstkanker Vlaanderen



Christos Markopoulos  
Professor of Surgery, President of  
UEMS-DBS  
Breast Surgery Division of UEMS



Renate Haidinger  
President  
Brustkrebs Deutschland e.V.



Plamen Taushanov  
Chairman  
Bulgarian Association for Patients'  
Defense



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Niya Chari  
Director of Health Policy  
Canadian Breast Cancer Network



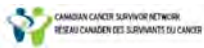
Frederick Merlier  
President  
Cancer vessie france les zuros



Nick York  
Chair  
CLL Advocates Network (CLLAN)



Jackie Manthorne  
President & CEO  
Canadian Cancer Survivor Network



Eva Backman  
President  
Cancerföreningen PALEMA



Dr. Brian Koffman  
Executive Vice President & Chief  
Medical Officer  
CLL Society



Jennifer Nebesky  
President and CEO  
Canadian Liver Foundation



Leonor Beleza  
President  
Champalimaud Foundation



Eva Villalba  
Executive Director  
Coalition Priorité Cancer au  
Québec



Jaap Verweij  
Managing Director  
Cancer Drug Development Forum  
(CDDF)



Mark Weber  
Co-Founder  
Charlotte Pancreatic Cancer  
Alliance



Barry Stein  
President/CEO  
Colorectal Cancer Canada



Nick Phillips  
Director  
Cancer Research & Genetics UK



István Balogh  
President  
Children Cancer Foundation



Alina Comanescu  
Founder  
Community Health Association  
Romania





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Teresa Regueiro  
President and founder  
Comunidad Española de Pacientes  
con Mieloma Múltiple



Drazen Vincek  
Head of the organisation  
Croatian Leukemia and Lymphoma  
Society



Ken Keller  
President  
Daiichi Sankyo Inc.



Carmen Uscatu  
President  
Dăruiește Viață / Give Life



Karin Kastrati  
CEO  
Das Lebenshaus e.V.



Bertrand Ducrey  
Chief Executive Officer  
Debiopharm International SA



Johannes Bruns  
Secretary General  
DKG



Jacqueline Daly  
Director of Services  
East Galway & Midlands Cancer  
Support



Ken Mastris  
President  
ECPC



Edit Báródi  
secretary of the association  
Egészség Hídja Összefogás az  
Egészségért a Mellrák Ellen  
Egyesület



Fabio Andreola  
Chief Executive Officer  
Elesta S.p.A.



Dr. Monteic A. Sizer  
National Representative  
Elvin Howard, Sr. Pancreatic  
Cancer Advocacy Foundation



Stuart P. Feldman, MD  
President  
Empire State Hematology and  
Oncology Society



Karla Ruiz de Castilla  
President  
ESPERANTRA



Rosanna D'Antona  
President  
Europa Donna Italia



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Gertrude Abela  
President  
Europa Donna Malta



André Deschamps  
Chairman  
Europa Uomo



Bernard Grimm  
Healthcare Director  
EuropaBio



Iga Rawicka  
Vice President  
EuropaColon Poland



Jana Pifflová Španková  
President  
EUROPACOLON Slovakia



Sarah Collen  
EU Policy Manager  
European Association of Urology



Mike Morrissey  
Chief Executive  
European Cancer Organisation



Nathalie Moll  
Director General  
European Federation of  
Pharmaceutical Industries and  
Associations EFPIA



Professor Wojciech Golusiński  
President  
European Head and Neck Society



Prof. John Gribben  
President  
European Hematology Association



Emma Woodford  
Director  
European Oncology Nursing  
Society



Dr Denis Lacombe  
Director General  
European Organisation for  
Research and Treatment of Cancer  
(EORTC)



*The future of cancer therapy*

Alex Eniu  
Deputy Scientific Director  
European School of Oncology



Isabel T. Rubio Rodriguez  
MD  
European Society of Breast Cancer  
Specialists



Isabel T. Rubio  
Breast Surgical Oncologist, ESSO  
President-elect  
European Society of Surgical  
Oncology (ESSO)



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Lily Reisser  
ETHA Secretariat  
European Thrombosis and  
Haemostasis Alliance (ETHA)



Maira Caleffi  
Volunteer President  
FEMAMA



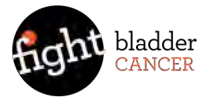
Federica Valsecchi  
Research Project Manager  
Fondazione Nadia Valsecchi



Yann Le Cam  
Chief Executive Officer  
EURORDIS-Rare Diseases Europe



Lydia Makaroff  
CEO  
Fight Bladder Cancer



Marko Milovanović  
President of the association  
Forum pacijenata Srbije



Tamara Milagre  
President  
EVITA - Hereditary Cancer



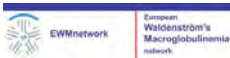
Dr Lama Sharara  
Director General  
Fondation A.R.C.A.D, Aide et  
Recherche en Cancérologie  
Digestive



Mariana Auad  
Vicepresidenta  
Fundación Argentina de Mieloma



Tine van der Schaaf  
secretary  
EWMnetwork



Anna Falanga  
Scientific Director  
Fondazione ARTET Onlus



Edith Grynspancholc  
President  
Fundación Natalí Dafne Flexer



Cezar Irimia  
President  
Federation of Cancer Patients  
Associations



Pietro Presti  
Managing Director  
Fondazione Edo ed Elvo Tempia



Łukasz Rokicki  
Carita President  
Fundacja Carita im. Wiesławy  
Adamiec



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Artur Jurchyszyn  
MD PhD  
Fundacja Centrum Leczenia  
Szpiczaka



Szymon Chrostowski  
President  
Fundacja Wygrajmy Zdrowie



Catalina Negara  
Director  
Fundatia Renasterea



Gail Attara  
Chief Executive Officer  
Gastrointestinal Society



Silvia P Neciosup  
DIRECTOR OF MEDICINE, MEDICAL  
ONCOLOGIST  
GECOPERU



Magdalena Magiera  
Co-Founder and Chairman  
Glioma-Center Foundation



Andrew Spiegel  
Executive Director  
Global Colon Cancer Association



Mrs Hilary D J Maxwell  
CEO & Chair of GO Girls  
GO Girls



Papachrisanthaki Labrini  
Chairwoman  
Group of Volunteers Against  
Cancer "AgaliaZO" of Western  
Greece



Begoña Barragan  
President  
Grupo Español de Pacientes con  
Cáncer (GEPAC)



Paul McCarthy and Ridwaan  
Jhetam  
Paul McCarthy, Oncology Regional  
Lead, Europe, and Ridwaan  
Jhetam, Regional Medical Director,  
Europe  
GSK



Amanda Hollinger  
Executive Director  
Head & Neck Cancer Alliance



David Stanbury  
TRUSTEE  
Head & Neck Cancer UK (HANCUK)



Paraskevi Mihalopoulou  
President BOD  
HELLENIC ASSOCIATION OF  
WOMEN WITH BREAST CANCER  
ALMA ZOIS



Georgios Kapetanakis  
Secretary of Board  
HELLENIC CANCER FEDERATION



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Amanda Psyrrí  
President, Chief of Medical  
Oncology and Associate Professor  
of Medicine, National Kapodistrian  
Uni of Athens Med school  
Hellenic Society of Head and Neck  
Cancer - HeSHNCA



Silvia Sebastiani  
Group Head of Medical Affairs  
Helsinn Healthcare SA



Anne Krolikowski, CAE  
Executive Director  
Hematology/Oncology Pharmacy  
Association (HOPA)



Hripsime Martirosyan  
Founding CEO  
HENARAN charitable foundation



Rudy Bess  
Founding Director  
Hope Light Foundation



Sven van Egmond  
Co-founder  
HUKAs (Dutch Skin Cancer  
Foundation)



Kara Alikpala  
Founding president  
ICANSERVE Foundation



Flaminia Fegarotti  
International Relations  
IncontraDonna Onlus



Mark A. Henderson, MD  
President  
Indiana Oncology Society



José Fernando do prado moura  
Medical oncology  
Instituto de medicina integral  
professor Fernando figueira



Luciana Holtz  
Founder and President  
Instituto Oncoguia



Elisabete Weiderpass  
Director  
International Agency for Research  
on Cancer (IARC)

Kathy Oliver  
Chair and Co-Director  
International Brain Tumour  
Alliance (IBTA)



Prof Julia Downing  
Chief Executive  
International Children's Palliative  
Care Network (ICPCN)



Anna Falanga  
Chairman  
International Conference on  
Thrombosis and Hemostasis Issues  
in Cancer





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Suzette Kox  
Secretary General  
International Generic and  
Biosimilar Medicines Association  
(IGBA)



Marta Szulc  
Executive Director  
International Kidney Cancer  
Coalition



Serdar Erdogan  
Director of GMAN  
International Myeloma Foundation



Matthew Obinna Nwaneri, MD,  
MBA  
President  
Iowa Oncology Society



Jan Swiderski  
Director Global Public Affairs and  
Patient Advocacy  
Ipsen Pharma SAS



Erich Steyaert  
Advocacy Officer  
Irish Cancer Society



Yvonne O'Meara  
Co Founder of the ISGOPPI  
Irish Society of Gynaecological  
Oncology Public & Patient  
Involvement Group



Anouk De Vroey  
Head Government Affairs & Policy,  
Pharmaceuticals & Vaccines,  
Janssen EMEA  
Janssen



Dr. Sami Khatib  
President of the Society  
Jordan Oncology Society



Juliet Ibrahim  
Founder  
Juliet Ibrahim Foundation



Christopher Dakhil, MD, FACP  
President  
Kansas Society of Clinical Oncology



Asli Ortakmac  
President of Kanser Savaşçıları  
Kanser Savaşçıları Association



Menia Koukougiani  
FOUNDER-MANAGER  
KARKINAKI Awareness for  
Childhood and adolescent cancer



Zoe Grammatoglou  
President of the Board  
KEFI Association of Cancer Patients



Dr Barbara J Kenner  
Founder  
Kenner Family Research Fund



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Rose Woodward  
Founder and CEO  
Kidney Cancer Support Network



Nick Turkentine  
Chief Operating Officer  
Kidney Cancer UK



Bryan Lewis  
President  
KidneyCAN



Martin H. Bluth, MD, PhD  
Global Medical Director  
Kids Kicking Cancer



Mai Nielsen  
Chairman  
Kræftforeningen Tidslerne



Aline Lauda Freitas Chaves  
Chair  
Latin American Cooperative  
Oncology Group - Head and Neck



Sandra Huber  
Publisher  
Leben mit Krebs



Erika Pataki  
coord.  
Lélek-zet Egyesület "Breath"  
Association



Xavier Bertin  
Vice President Global Business  
Unit Thrombosis  
LEO Pharma A/S



Cindy Price Gavin  
Founding Executive Director  
Let's Win! Pancreatic Cancer  
Foundation



Norman Scherzer  
Executive Director  
Life Raft Group



Willem Verstraete  
President  
Liga voor Gelaryngectomeerden



Neringa Čiakienė  
Director  
Lithuanian Cancer Patient  
Coalition (POLA)



Sandra Balboni  
President  
Loto Onlus



Regine Daniel Ihlen  
Treasurer  
Lung Cancer Europe



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Andrea Ferris  
President and CEO  
LUNGEvity Foundation



Linda Tantawi  
CEO  
Lustgarten Foundation



Elke Stienissen  
President  
Lymfklierkanker Vereniging  
Vlaanderen vzw



Maja Kocic  
President  
Lymphoma Patient Association  
LIPA



Anna Falanga  
Editor in chief  
Magazine of International  
Conference on Thrombosis and  
Hemostasis Issues in Cancer



Balázs Rozványi  
President  
Magyar Rákellenes Liga -  
Hungarian League Against Cancer



Professor René Leemans  
Make Sense Campaign Chair  
Make Sense Campaign



Cheri Lynn Ambrose  
President / Co-founder  
Peggy Miller  
Director  
Male Breast Cancer Coalition



Ic6 T6th  
President  
Mallow Flower Foundation/  
M6lyvavir6g Alap6tv6ny



Anthony Rossi  
President  
Malta Colorectal Cancer  
Awareness Group



Gertrude A. Buttigieg  
Chairperson  
Malta Health Network



Eva Schumacher-Wulf  
Editor-in-chief  
Mamma Mia! Breast Cancer  
Magazine



Rossana Berardi  
Prof., MD  
Marcangola



Liz Yeates  
CEO  
Marie Keating Foundation



L6a Coulet  
Executive Director  
Medical Nutrition International  
Industry (MNI)



# JOINT LETTER ON COVID-19 AND CANCER



Kate O'Regan  
Communications & Stakeholder  
Relations Senior Manager  
Medicines for Europe



Anne Papin  
Vice-President, Government  
Affairs & Policy EU  
Merck



Mary Hesdorffer, NP  
Executive Director  
Mesothelioma Applied Research  
Foundation



William H. Shrieves  
President  
Mid-Shore Pancreatic Cancer  
Foundation, Inc.



Victor Julio Quesada Varela  
Physician  
Mieloma.com



Vasile Ianovici  
Vice-president  
MIELOPRO

Mira Armour  
Co-founder and Executive Director  
MijelomCRO Croatian Myeloma  
Patients Network



Samith Kochuparambil, MD  
President  
Minnesota Society of Clinical  
Oncology



Joseph J. Muscato, MD, FACP  
President  
Missouri Oncology Society



Jack Hensold, MD  
President  
Montana State Oncology Society



Philip Lewis  
President  
Mouth Cancer Foundation



Deepak Khanna  
President MSD Europe and Canada  
Human Health  
MSD



Joyline Chepkorir  
Research Assistant (Johns Hopkins  
University)  
Mwangaza Cancer Initiative



Martine Elias MSc  
Executive Director  
Myeloma Canada - Myélome  
Canada



Viorica Cursaru  
President  
Myeloma Euronet Romania



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Natasha Kammi  
President  
Mykos Cancer Association



David Bakelman  
CEO  
National Pancreas Foundation



Jana Pifflova Špankova  
President  
NIE RAKOVINE - No To CANCER,  
SLOVAKIA



Mariella Agius  
Executive Secretary  
National Alliance for Rare Diseases  
Support - Malta



Arja Broenland  
Director  
Nederlandse Federatie van  
Kankerpatientenorganisaties NFK



Ivan McMinn  
Chair  
NIPANC

George Sultana  
Council Member  
National Association of  
Pensioners, Malta



conrad van driessche  
director  
NEOVIDA



Jimmy Ruiz, MD  
President  
North Carolina Oncology  
Association



Robert W. Carlson, MD  
Chief Executive Officer  
National Comprehensive Cancer  
Network



Dan Curtis, MD  
President  
Nevada Oncology Society



Federica Castiglione  
Ex. Director Patient Engagement  
Region Europe  
Kees Roks  
Head Region Europe Oncology  
Novartis Pharma AG



Scout NFN  
Executive Director  
National LGBT Cancer Network



Barbara L. McAneny, MD  
President  
New Mexico Society of Clinical  
Oncology



Ana Tecic Vuger  
MD PhD Medical Oncologist,  
Breast Cancer Oncology  
OncoWay, Croatia





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Petra Adamkova  
Director  
ONKO Unie



Louis Baldachino  
Chairman & Founder  
Pancreatic Cancer Awareness  
Gibraltar



Yesim Tuncer  
International Project Director  
Pi Women's Cancer Charity



Ayşe Bora  
Member of the Board  
Onko-Sev



Michelle Capobianco  
Chief Executive Officer  
Pancreatic Cancer Canada



Hellen Kastanara  
Vice President  
PIERIA CANCER PATIENTS - PCP



Sharon O'Toole  
Board Member  
Ovacare



Alfredo Carrato  
MD, PhD  
Pancreatic Cancer Europe



Antonio Mano Azul  
President  
Portuguese Academy of Oral  
Medicine



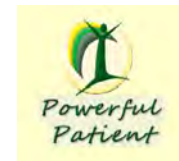
Elisabeth Baugh  
CEO  
Ovarian Cancer Canada



Despina Zapounidou  
President  
PASMMO- HELLENIC BONE  
MARROW TRANSPLANTED  
PATIENTS ASSOCIATION



Joyce Wilcox Graff  
President  
Powerful Patient Inc.



Audrey Kurlan-Marcy  
Cofounder/Chair  
Pancreatic Cancer Alliance



Masum Hossain  
Regional President, Oncology,  
International Developed Markets  
Pfizer



Steve Coldicott  
Director  
precision medicine forum



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Gorica Djokic  
secretary of association  
Progovori



Jida El Hajjar  
VP  
Quebec Breast cancer foundation



Alan Miller, MD, PhD (as of  
01/01/2020)  
President  
Rocky Mountain Oncology Society



Runcie C. W. Chidebe  
Executive Director  
Project PINK BLUE



Cathy Hirsch  
President  
Reach to Recovery International



Dan Zaharescu  
Executive Director  
Romanian Association of  
International Medicines  
Manufacturers ARPIM



Dino Verrelli  
Founder & CEO  
Project Purple



Adrian Pogacian  
Chairman  
ReThinking Europe



Irina Borovova/ Anna Solovyeva  
President / Director of  
international communications  
Russian Association of Oncological  
Patients "ZDRAVSTVUY!"



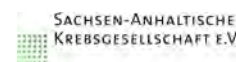
Susan Oliver  
Chair & Trustee  
Pseudomyxoma Survivor



Gian Luca Baiocchi  
Professor  
RicerChiAmo Onlus



Prof. Dr. med. Hans-Joachim  
Schmoll  
Chief Executive Officer  
Sachsen-Anhaltische  
Krebsgesellschaft e.V.



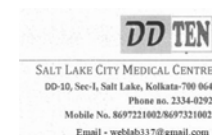
Svetlana Samardzic  
President  
Punim plućima



Sanja Njegic and Michael  
Oberreiter  
Global Head of Patient Partnership  
and Global Head of Access  
Management  
Roche



Gouri Shankar Bhattacharyya  
Medical Oncologist  
Salt Lake City Medical Center



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Anna Maria Mancuso  
President and Legal Representative  
Salute Donna Onlus



Adela Ayensa Alonso  
General Director  
Salvati A.C.



Izlen Toker, Rebecca Guntern  
Head, Patient Communications  
and Advocacy ; Head, Region  
Europe  
Sandoz



Robin Cohen  
CEO  
Sandy Rollman Ovarian Cancer  
Foundation



Alexander Zehnder  
Head Global Oncology  
Sanofi



Savo Pilipovic  
President of Association  
Serbian Association of Patients



Mary Dean  
Executive Director  
Society for Immunotherapy of  
Cancer (SITC)



Gene Saylor, MD  
President  
South Carolina Oncology Society



Monika Puchowska  
Member of the Board  
STOWARZYSZENIE RÓŻOWY  
MOTYL



Ljiljana Vukota  
General secretary  
SVE za NJU (EVERYTHING for HER)



Peter Lakwijk  
Chair  
Svenska Sköldkörtelföreningen



Ken Mastris  
Chairman  
TACKLE PROSTATE CANCER



Stephen M. Schleicher, MD, MBA  
President  
Tennessee Oncology Practice  
Society



Erick Tyssier  
Head of Government Affairs  
Europe  
Teva Pharmaceuticals Europe



Debra Patt, MD, PhD, MBA  
President  
Texas Society of Clinical Oncology



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Mahesh Seetharam, MD, FACP  
President  
The Arizona Society of Clinical  
Oncology



James Arthur Caldwell  
Director  
The Northern Ireland Rare Disease  
Partnership



Gertrude Nakigudde  
CEO  
Uganda Women's Cancer Support  
Organisation

Nicolas Philippou  
CEO  
The Cyprus Association of Cancer  
Patients and Friends (PASYKAF)



A. Prof. Dr. Mahmoud Salama, MD,  
PhD  
Director of the Oncofertility  
Consortium  
The Oncofertility Consortium



Sonali Johnson  
Head, Knowledge, Advocacy and  
Policy  
Union for International Cancer  
Control (UICC)



Maria Buti  
EU Policy Councillor  
the European Association for the  
Study of the Liver



Ivana Plechatá  
Coordinator  
The voice of cancer patients



Vandana Gupta  
Founder & Trustee  
V Care Foundation



Nadine Prévost  
Director, Community Services  
The Leukemia & Lymphoma  
Society of Canada



Peter Lakwijk  
Treasurer  
Thyroid Federation International



Osman toktas  
Asst. Prof. Dr.  
Van association to fight breast  
cancer



Pat Garcia-Gonzalez  
CEO  
The Max Foundation



MEP Frances Fitzgerald  
Chair of Transforming Breast  
Cancer Together (TBCT)  
Transforming Breast Cancer  
Together



María Eugenia Aponte-Rueda  
President  
Venezuelan Breast Cancer  
Research and Education  
Foundation



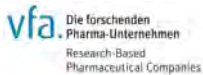
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Dr. Ingrid Resch  
Chairman of the board  
Verein zur Foerderung der  
Senologie/Brustkrebs. e. V.



Han Steutel  
President  
vfa



Chandra Clark  
Executive Director  
VHL Alliance



Shaantanu Donde  
Head of Portfolio Management  
- Medical Affairs ( Developed  
Markets & JANZ)  
Viatrix



Richard Ingram, MD  
President  
Virginia Association of  
Hematologist & Oncologist



Beate Bartès  
President  
Vivre sans Thyroïde



President  
West Virginia Oncology Society

Dr. Vladimir Lazar  
Chief Scientific and Operating  
Officer  
WIN Consortium



Benjamin M. Parsons, DO  
President  
Wisconsin Association of  
Hematology & Oncology



Silvia Novello  
President  
Women Against Lung Cancer  
in Europe



Assia Konsoulova  
Chair  
Women for oncology - Bulgaria



Prof.ssa Rossana Berardi  
President  
Women for oncology - Italy



Barbara Wilson  
Founder & Director  
Working With Cancer



Alex Filicevas  
Executive Director  
World Bladder Cancer Patient  
Coalition



Mary Lynne Van Poelgeest  
President  
World Federation for Incontinence  
and Pelvic Problems- WFIPP - WFIP





# JOINT LETTER ON COVID-19 AND CANCER



Clara MacKay  
CEO  
World Ovarian Cancer Coalition



Olakekan Ajayi, PharmD, MBA  
President  
Wyoming State Oncology Society



Ekaterini Kounalaki  
Chair of BoD  
EY ZΩ Living Well with Cancer



Dr Stephen Connor  
Executive Director  
Worldwide Hospice Palliative Care  
Alliance



Salih Yuce  
Chairman  
Young Accumulation Association

