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Tackling the silent killer in Europe

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By European Alliance for Personalised Medicine Executive Director Denis Horgan, Núria Malats & Esther Molina Montes, Grupo de Epidemiología Genética y Molecular, Centro Nacional de Investigaciones Oncológicas (CNIO)

While the past decade has witnessed significant improvements in the survival rate of some cancers via huge progress in prevention, diagnosis and treatment, pancreatic cancer has resisted the trend.

The disease still has the poorest survival rates of any cancer and, according to predictions, pancreatic cancer-related deaths will keep rising across Europe, while that of other cancers will continue to fall. There are several important research and medical unmet needs in relation to this disease, and the issues were discussed during a conference entitled 'Burning issues in Pancreatology' held last week (6-7 November) in Cluj-Napoca, Romania.

Pancreatic cancer is a hot topic at the moment, with the European Alliance for Personalised Medicine (EAPM) in collaboration with the COST Action BM1204 EUPancreas recently releasing a [White Paper](#) on the disease. Most of the

issues raised by the Alliance's paper were discussed in a meeting in the European Parliament this week.

As a result of this, one EAPM member organisation, the European Cancer Patient Coalition, will take the lead with outreach initiatives in pancreatic cancer at the national level, supported by the Alliance at the political level. The two-day conference in Cluj-Napoca, meanwhile, co-organized by EUPancreas COST Action, EFISDS and EPC, discussed how to renew efforts to develop more efficient prevention, diagnostic and treatment strategies.

It found that more etiological research is needed to identify new causative factors of pancreatic cancer and its premalignant lesions, to develop biomarkers of early-stage diagnosis, to identify populations at high risk of the disease, to characterize disease profiles with varying responses to treatment, as well as tumour subtypes of pancreatic cancer with different clinical behaviour, and to implement actions in this new and rapidly developing field of personalised medicine.

The conference also found that novel and cross-disciplinary tools as well as sustained multidisciplinary collaborative efforts are essential to move forward in research.

Núria Malats, chair of EUPancreas COST Action, said: "The application of the rapidly evolving 'omics' technologies in cancer research has demonstrated that large-scale international collaboration is essential to decipher relevant information in the context of massive-scale interrogations."

The EUPancreas COST Action is a European platform facilitating the collaboration of a broad range of European and international pancreatic cancer multidisciplinary research groups. It brings together young researchers alongside those with more experience to allow Europe to actively participate in international research into the disease.

Overall, the Action involves 195 multidisciplinary members from 22 EU countries. The main objective of EUPancreas is to capitalise on emerging scientific and technological developments in the field of pancreatic cancer, in order to integrate knowledge and experience in a multidisciplinary way "from cell to society".

This is achieved through the promotion and application of uniform study tools and protocols, fostering their optimal use by early-stage researchers, enhancing the mobility and training of researchers, and disseminating the results produced by the Action to the broader society. EUPancreas builds together with other international initiatives to increase public and health policymaker awareness about this silent killer disease's research unmet needs and impacts.