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"I'm here today because  
I took positive action against  
colorectal cancer"



# europacolon is committed to preventing deaths from colorectal cancer and improving the quality of life and support for those affected by the disease

## who we are

europacolon is an independent, not-for-profit organisation, founded in 2004 in order to raise awareness of colorectal cancer and to support and involve all European citizens in the fight against the disease.

Its founder members include Jola Gore-Booth, ex Chief Executive of Colon Cancer Concern (BCUK); Professor Adam Dziki, Professor at the Medical University of Łódź, responsible for the Department of General and Colorectal Surgery. He is also Vice Rector of the University; Professor Eric Van Cutsem, Professor at the University of Leuven, Belgium, responsible for the division of Digestive Oncology at the University Hospital Gasthuisberg in Leuven.

Currently there is no other dedicated pan-European colorectal cancer patient advocacy group. It is the intention of the founder members of europacolon that within five years all countries of the European Union and those waiting for admission will be



represented by patients, carers, healthcare professionals, politicians and the public in the fight against colorectal cancer.

europacolon aims to work closely with other European cancer organisations and institutions involved with colorectal cancer.

It is the intention of europacolon to empower the people of Europe to become a strong and influential voice for all issues surrounding colorectal cancer at local, regional and national level and to represent and support the people's voice at the highest levels within the EU.

## background

The World Health Organisation (WHO) (Globocan) data\* indicate that colorectal cancer now exceeds the incidence of lung cancer as the most common malignancy in Europe. 304,687 new cases were diagnosed in 2000 as compared with 301,090 for lung cancer.

\*this data is for incidence rates for both sexes on a cancer site in Europe when Eastern European accession countries and European Free Trade Association (EFTA) are included.



In addition, a Pan European survey\* to gauge public awareness of colorectal cancer, showed that even though 70% of people agreed that the disease could be easily treated if diagnosed early, 66% would be too embarrassed to act on their symptoms. Overall the survey showed that awareness of colorectal cancer including lifestyle factors, risk factors and screening was low.

\*the survey was carried out by the UEGF (2003 IPSOS) and invited over 20,000 people from 21 European Countries to participate.

## statistics

Most recent statistics of deaths from colorectal cancer show that although there is a slight lowering in figures, there is still a near 50% mortality rate.

**Despite this, colorectal cancer is highly treatable if diagnosed in its early stages.**

- Colorectal cancer (cancer of the colon and rectum) is the 3rd most common cancer worldwide affecting both men and women equally
- In Europe it has the highest incidence of all cancers
- Over 300,000 people in Europe develop colorectal cancer each year; more than 50% develop the advanced disease
- Over 125,000 people in Europe die from colorectal cancer each year
- Recent figures in 15 European countries have indicated that every hour 11 people die from colorectal cancer

# the goals, challenges and outcomes

## goals

These are to:

- Prioritise and raise the profile of colorectal cancer
- Develop patient advocacy groups throughout Europe
- Create a colorectal cancer community
- Increase awareness of symptoms and prevention of the disease
- Campaign for screening and improved choice and availability of treatment
- Work in partnership with healthcare professionals to provide further training education for the clinical community
- Encourage the improvement of European standards and equity of care

## challenges

**europacolon** acknowledges that representing or promoting a cause or purpose on behalf of oneself or others is not an easy concept in some European countries and that many challenges will have to be overcome, including cultural attitudes towards cancer and lack of understanding about the disease.

**europacolon** feels, however, that as there is so little colorectal cancer information and support currently available for the people of Europe, every little bit done to change the current state - no matter how small - will make a difference.

## outcomes

**europacolon** aims to educate and empower the people of Europe about colorectal cancer, thereby reducing mortality rates.

# activities

Every important subject has its issues and colorectal cancer is no exception. Lack of understanding, fear and embarrassment have until recently surrounded the disease, limiting efforts to raise awareness. However, in recent years there has been a change in attitude towards colorectal cancer, giving a greater focus to the disease and creating a more receptive audience.

## campaigning

**europacolon** is continuing to campaign on behalf of patients' with colorectal cancer. In particular it is focusing its attention on:

### access to better screening

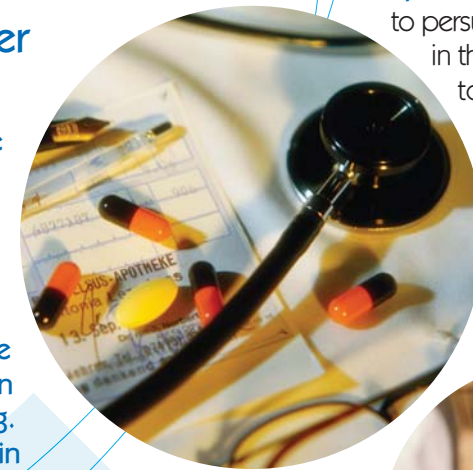
- **The European Code against Cancer and EU council recommends (December 2003) "Men and women from 50 years of age should participate in colorectal screening. This should be within programmes with built-in quality assurance procedures"**
- However, the availability of colorectal cancer screening in Europe remains patchy

- **europacolon** is campaigning to speed up the introduction of widespread screening across Europe

## access to new treatments

- Newest drugs and new combinations of drugs can add up to two years or more to the length and quality of patients' lives
- However, the national health services in many countries continue to deny access to these treatments

- **europacolon** is campaigning to persuade governments in the European Union to give greater access to treatments to people with colorectal cancer



## education

europacolon is working to develop sources of funding to enable grants to be made to healthcare professionals for further training and education in colorectal cancer management encouraging more equitable access to the best care and treatment.

## the media

The media plays a vital role in conveying important issues to thousands of people and in generating debates around these topics. For many years, the media has struggled with how to write about a disease that although it is

the most common cancer in Europe is still very much a taboo subject! Some issues causing limited coverage were:

- Fear and lack of understanding surrounding the disease
- Lack of medical developments in the area
- Mainly older, less media-friendly people were affected
- Patients were not, by nature, campaigners, and were unlikely to proactively contact the media
- Colorectal cancer affects a part of the body which is embarrassing to talk about

However, things have begun to change. europacolon is actively talking to the media and working with them to raise the profile of colorectal cancer thereby helping to achieve its goals.

## europacolon's call to action

europacolon calls on everybody in Europe:

- patients
- carers
- clinicians
- media
- the public
- governments
- the European Commission



To prioritise colorectal cancer, the most common cause of cancer in Europe and actively work with us to help combat the disease.

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