EUROPEAN SOCIETY OF ONCOLOGY PHARMACY

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From Meetings to Meaningful Collaboration – Building Sustainable Progress in Oncology Pharmacy

Dear Colleagues,

Professional congresses are an important part of the life of a scientific society. They provide opportunities for continuing education, the exchange of scientific knowledge and practical experience, and personal encounters among colleagues. They help us establish contacts, strengthen professional relationships and develop a shared understanding of the challenges facing oncology pharmacy.

For ESOP Global, these opportunities are particularly valuable. Our members work in different healthcare systems, under different regulatory frameworks and with very different levels of resources and professional development. Bringing these perspectives together is one of the strengths of our global community.

Our international congress, the European Conference of Oncology Pharmacy (ECOP), held every two years, provides an important global meeting point. The next ECOP will take place in 2028. National conferences also play a valuable role, offering opportunities to discuss professional developments within local healthcare systems and to exchange experiences among colleagues who face similar practical challenges. Both levels of congress activity deserve our support and can benefit from closer cooperation.

Nevertheless, congresses are only one part of what makes a professional society strong and sustainable. Their value extends far beyond the days of the event only when the knowledge, contacts and motivation generated there are carried forward into continuous collaboration.

The question is therefore not whether we need congresses. We certainly do. The more important question is how we can connect these meetings with shared professional objectives and ongoing activities that generate lasting benefits for our members and, above all, for patients with cancer.

Shared global goals create continuity
Sustainable cooperation begins with common goals. It does not depend primarily on how often we meet, but on whether we agree on what we want to achieve together and are willing to work continuously towards these objectives.

Oncology pharmacy provides many examples of challenges that transcend national borders. Safe handling of hazardous medicines, aseptic preparation, occupational safety, quality assurance, the organisation of oncology pharmacy services and pharmaceutical care for patients are concerns shared by professionals around the world. The conditions under which these goals can be achieved may differ considerably, but the underlying responsibility remains the same.

This is where ESOP Global can make a lasting contribution: by developing common professional standards, promoting the exchange of experience and supporting their practical implementation in different healthcare systems.

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A particularly important example is **QuapoS, the Quality Standard for the Oncology Pharmacy Service**. Since the first edition was published in 1996, QuapoS has evolved through decades of professional discussion, international contributions and continuous revision. QuapoS 7, approved by the ESOP Global General Assembly in October 2024, comprises six chapters and addresses the quality of oncology pharmacy services in a comprehensive way.

These chapters cover quality assurance, personnel, the pharmacy aseptic preparation unit, oncological drug production, the pharmacy as a coordination centre and pharmaceutical care. Together, they demonstrate that quality in oncology pharmacy cannot be reduced to a single technical procedure or confined to the pharmacy's preparation room. It encompasses the entire process, from safe preparation and handling to coordination across healthcare settings and the care of individual patients.
The development of QuapoS illustrates what long-term international collaboration can achieve. A common professional objective has provided the basis for contributions from different countries, discussion of different practices and the gradual development of a shared quality framework.
This is precisely the kind of continuity we should seek to strengthen in other areas of our work. A standard is not sustainable simply because it has been published. Its value depends on continuous professional discussion, education, application, evaluation and further development.

Working groups: turning common goals into practical work
The experience gained through QuapoS also demonstrates why our working structures are so important. ESOP Global's working groups offer a practical framework for members to contribute to specific professional objectives throughout the year. They can develop recommendations, prepare publications, initiate surveys and research, exchange expertise and support the implementation of common standards.

An especially important feature of these groups is that **participation is not limited to national delegates or members holding formal representative positions**. Colleagues can contribute because they have relevant expertise, a professional interest or the motivation to work on a particular subject.
This is essential for a global society. Our collective expertise is much broader than the group of members elected to represent their countries. We should make full use of the knowledge and commitment available throughout our membership, irrespective of formal roles or geographical location.

Working groups can therefore create a direct connection between our global objectives and the practical experience of individual members. They also allow colleagues who may not be able to attend every international congress to participate actively in the society's development.

Of course, establishing a working group is not an achievement in itself. Its value lies in the work it undertakes and the results it produces. This requires clearly defined objectives, realistic priorities, committed participants and continuity. Activities should be reviewed regularly, and their results should be communicated to the wider membership so that the work benefits the society as a whole.

The aim should not be to create more structures, but to ensure that existing structures provide meaningful opportunities for collaboration and deliver tangible outcomes.

Linking global objectives with national practice
Global standards and projects become meaningful only when they connect with the realities of daily practice.

National conferences and professional networks are particularly important in this respect. They provide opportunities to discuss how international recommendations can be applied within national legislation, available infrastructure, staffing arrangements and economic circumstances. They also allow practical experiences and difficulties to be communicated back to the international community.

The relationship should work in both directions. Global cooperation can help countries develop and improve their oncology pharmacy services, while national experience can identify gaps, reveal new challenges and contribute to the further development of international standards.

For example, a common commitment to safe aseptic preparation may require different implementation pathways depending on the facilities, resources and regulatory requirements of individual countries. International collaboration can establish the professional principles and quality objectives, while national and local networks help translate them into practice.

This is not a contradiction between global standards and national autonomy. It is a way of combining a shared professional responsibility with the flexibility required for implementation in different circumstances.

Congresses as milestones in a continuous process
Our congresses should remain important milestones in this process.

The biennial ECOP provides an opportunity to bring together the global community, review progress, discuss strategic priorities, present scientific results and establish new collaborations. National congresses can deepen these discussions and connect them more closely with local professional needs.

Between congresses, however, the work must continue. Working groups, joint projects, digital exchanges and cooperation between national and international networks should provide the continuity needed to turn discussions into action.

This approach also gives congresses a stronger purpose. Projects can be launched or advanced at one meeting, developed over the following months and presented with their results at the next. New questions arising from the work can then form the basis for the next cycle of collaboration.
In this way, congresses do not stand alone as individual events. They become integral parts of a continuous process of professional development.

A shared responsibility for the future
For ESOP Global, the opportunity is clear. We have an international membership, a history of developing professional standards and experience in bringing colleagues together around common objectives. We should build on these strengths by connecting our meetings more closely with sustained collaborative work.

This means identifying a manageable number of shared priorities, supporting working groups in achieving concrete results, encouraging participation beyond formal representative structures and ensuring that knowledge developed internationally reaches members working in national and local settings.

It also means recognising that not every contribution has to take the form of a major research project or international publication. Education, the exchange of practical experience, the development of guidance and the systematic improvement of professional practice can all make important contributions when they are linked to clear objectives and pursued consistently.

Ultimately, the strength of a professional society is not determined by the number of congresses it organises, the number of working groups it establishes or the number of meetings it holds. Its strength is demonstrated by its ability to bring people together around common goals and to turn their combined expertise into lasting improvements.

Congresses bring us together. Shared standards give us direction. Working groups and joint projects turn our common goals into sustainable progress.
If we succeed in connecting these elements, ECOP, national conferences and our year-round activities will reinforce one another. We will make better use of the expertise within our membership, strengthen

cooperation across borders and ensure that our collective work continues to improve the quality and safety of oncology pharmacy services.

Our ultimate responsibility is not simply to maintain a network of professionals, but to use that network to make a meaningful difference to the care of patients with cancer.
I believe this should be a central principle guiding the further development of ESOP Global.

With kind regards,

Klaus Meier
President ESOP Global