

Improving Breast Cancer Care: Using the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic as a blueprint?

Online event, May 26, 15:00-16:00 CEST

On 26 May, the Transforming Breast Cancer Together initiative hosted the virtual event "**Improving Breast Cancer Care: Using the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic as a blueprint?**". The event aimed to facilitate an important discussion between patients, physicians, policymakers and industry, to identify and explore the valuable lessons learned from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and how it can help to advance breast cancer care in the EU.

While all panellists agreed that the COVID-19 pandemic exposed the deeply rooted vulnerabilities of the healthcare systems, it also displayed opportunities for improvement, showcased unprecedented collaboration and effort between the stakeholders within the healthcare ecosystem and created a critical momentum that could be leveraged to address the unmet needs. The panellists called for more attention to the disparities that still exist among European Member States with regards to access to cancer treatment and care and highlighted COVID-19's devastating impact on cancer patient pathways.

MEP Frances Fitzgerald, the chair of TBCT initiative, welcomed everyone to the webinar stressing the importance of clearing the backlog in breast cancer care and the speakers Dr Isabel Rubio, Head of Breast Surgical Oncology at Clinica Universidad de Navarra in Spain, Tanja Španić, President of Europa Donna - The European Breast Cancer Coalition and Brigitte Nolet, General Manager at Roche engaged in a panel discussion highlighting the challenges and the unexpected opportunities for better cancer care in Europe as a result of the pandemic. The most prominent lessons learned that were outlined by the speakers were the following:

- It is a critical moment to leverage the digital transformation of the healthcare sector and enable innovation to flow in healthcare systems.
- Realising the full potential of digital health and Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the efficient and safe use of health data can play a pivotal role in enhancing cancer treatment and care.
- Ambitious Europe's Beating Cancer Plan is a great opportunity that should be seized to improve cancer care in Europe. This will require Member State's commitment and dedication to be correctly implemented.
- There is a stressing need for strong political will to ensure that the appropriate attention is given to screening, prevention and early detection of cancer.
- COVID-19 has demonstrated the value of efficient and speedy regulatory processes without compromising safety and quality.

The speakers stressed that cancer is a pandemic in itself and should not be overlooked, underestimated or forgotten. It is crucial to act together and efficiently at a national and European level to improve screening and early prevention as cancer cases will likely increase as a consequence of the pandemic.

Dr Fatima Cardoso concluded by sharing TBCT's "[Renewed Call for Change](#)" in view of the implementation of Europe's Beating Cancer Plan that aims to bring to the attention of decision-makers key recommendations to ensure the successful implementation of the Plan, achieve its ambitious goals and maximise its potential.