Position of EHA on the Harmonization of Training and Education in Europe

Trainees and specialists in hematology must be fit for practice. It is our mission to promote excellence in education in European hematology. To improve patient care and public health it is essential to raise and maintain the skills and competences of hematologists to an equally high standard across European countries. Therefore, we aim to harmonize and improve training and education in hematology in Europe.

The challenge
Education and training are largely national competencies. Except for the EU’s competency to encourage and support cooperation, it is at the level of the Member State where policies about the education of medical specialists are decided upon and implemented. However, in the context of the Single Market Act, the freedom of people to move and work in any EU country is supported by legislation that governs the mutual recognition of professional qualifications, including those of for hematology. Hence, medical specialties are organized differently in different countries. For hematology major variations include the organization of transfusion medicine as a separate specialty; pediatric hematology as a separate specialty; the role of laboratory technical staff vis-à-vis the hematologist. In addition, the existence and means of quality assurance systems varies greatly. For instance, in some European countries a physician’s license to practice is dependent on his or her proven commitment to continuing medical education, in other countries such obligation does not exist. Moreover, differences in economic circumstances in the countries in Europe will impact upon the resources that are made available to provide training and education. This affects, for instance, trainees’ access to the most enhanced laboratory and diagnostic techniques.

The position
We, the representatives of hematology in Europe, believe that it is of the utmost importance that specialty training and continuing medical education in hematology in Europe is improved and harmonized so as to raise the quality of education and to increase professional mobility. We believe that the mutual recognition of hematologists in Europe must be governed by the notion that hematology is a comprehensive medical specialty that includes, as described in the European Curriculum for Hematology, benign clinical hematology, myeloid and lymphoid malignancies, plasma cell disorders, stem cell transplantation and special therapy, laboratory diagnosis, thrombosis/hemostasis, transfusion medicine, as well as general skills, such as communication, ethics, pharmacovigilance. Given the scope of the
discipline, mutual recognition of hematology training must be granted only when subject to a training that is up to the minimum recommendations formulated in the European Curriculum for Hematology or, in the absence of competence based recognition, a minimum duration of training of at least five years (or three when previous training include two years of internal medicine). In addition, specialists in Europe must update their knowledge and skills through continuing medical education on which re-licensing should be dependent.

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