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# Standards, like everything else, develop because we need them

**T**he patient is the focus of our attention. This is a view with which everyone will surely agree, although at times some may be tempted to add 'ultimately'. Ultimately it is not enough to recognise the importance of the principle; we also require the capacity – technical and economic – to implement it.

The European Union has again identified new members who are keen to join, as are their people. Since 2000 ESOP has been experiencing growing affinity with many experts involved in oncology pharmacy, calling on all of them to participate actively in the unification process.

Such was the spirit at the first Conference on Quality Standard for the Oncology Pharmacy Service (QuapoS) in September 2001 in Luxembourg. Standardisation, as we realised early on, is both an enormous challenge and an opportunity for oncology pharmacy. This spirit is alive and the participants of the workshops in 2004 and 2008 have continued in their mutual exchange. The fruits of this spirit lie not only in harmonisation and the benchmarking that result, but also in the freedom we have to develop in accordance with our local conditions – usually dependent on our social framework – and to identify and record differences.

For as we know, standards are not just about the identical things we have in common, but also about things that will remain different in future. Nothing is more depressing than attending courses or congresses that describe situations elsewhere that seem seductively desirable, but that cannot be implemented under conditions back home, in either the near or distant future. Sticking to 'the devil we know' is often the regrettable consequence.

QuapoS, developed by German hospital and public oncology pharmacists who were members of the German Association for Oncology Pharmacy (DGOP), should be seen as a symbol of progress.



- The first quality standard was published in 1997 and concentrated primarily on pharmacy services in the narrower sense, i.e. conditions to comply with in the production of cytotoxic substances.
- In 2000 the second edition reaffirmed and extended existing guidelines. It also incorporated services provided by oncology pharmacists as partners within an interdisciplinary team treating the patient. Furthermore, DGOP began certifying oncology pharmacy departments in pharmacies on the basis of QuapoS.

In the third edition, the field of pharmaceutical care was comprehensively examined. A holistic view of the patient and the orientation of pharmaceutical services toward the patient have now been reflected in the quality standard.

- Now in the fourth edition we have incorporated the results of the Luxembourg Conference for Standardisation in Oncology Pharmacy working groups from 2001 to 2008. In addition patient demands have been given more consideration.

Let me emphasise once more that the aim of QuapoS is not to apply German findings to the rest of the world. Rather we are attempting to approach any interested parties in their home country and in their own language, and to facilitate their entrance into the European debate. We are fully aware that the English language will be the bridge linking us in our common scientific purpose.

Now the QuapoS and the commentary of 40 well-known experts are published in English. As the next step, the translation of the QuapoS into 23 languages will be presented at the 15th European Cancer Conference in Berlin, Germany.

I wish to express my gratitude to the delegates, members and friends who have made all this possible.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Masterclass in Oncology Pharmacy will take place on 23–26 November 2009, in Athens, Greece. The event will focus on clinical oncology pharmacy and pharmaceutical care for oncology patients. Delegates will have the opportunity to participate in various workshops to obtain practical knowledge and skills, as well as attend an exhibition of devices and safety issues regarding their use.

For more information on the event, please visit [www.esop.li](http://www.esop.li) or contact Ms Foteini Papagiotti at [papagiotti.foteini@mind-work.gr](mailto:papagiotti.foteini@mind-work.gr).