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# Quality Standards for the Oncology Pharmacy Service

ESOP quality standards are the basis for a new Slovenian quality manual. They were much appreciated by hospital and independent pharmacists.

On 13–14 November 2009, a two-day meeting on quality standards for the oncology pharmacy service took place in Kranjska Gora, Slovenia. The main purpose of the meeting was the presentation of the book of the same name, accompanied by lectures on the preparation of cytotoxic drugs. As pharmacists active in this field, ESOP (European Society of Oncology Pharmacy), seeks to standardise and harmonise approaches. The Slovenian manual based on QuapoS (Quality Standards for Pharmaceutical Oncology Service) presents a significant contribution to the oncology pharmacy service in Slovenia. The book is divided into five parts: personnel, rooms and equipment, production of cytotoxic drug solutions, the pharmacy as coordination centre in treatment with cytotoxic drugs, and pharmaceutical care of the patient. It is hoped the manual will be of great assistance to pharmacists handling and administering cytotoxic drugs, organising work and rooms, and providing advice to patients, relatives and medical personnel.

As well as presenting the book, the guest speakers lectured on the first day on various aspects of handling cytotoxic drugs. Professor Per Hartvig-Honoré, Lecturer in Pharmacokinetics at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark, graphically illustrated the benefits and drawbacks of production practice. Presenting the preparation of cytotoxic drugs for individual patients in hospitals 'GMP in Small Scale Sterile Production' he focused on ways to ensure quality throughout the process. The quality manual is a significant element, which should be recommended for planning all processes and tests. In his lecture 'Health hazards to personnel handling cytotoxic drugs' Professor Hartvig stressed again the significance of quality personal protection equipment, such as double gloving, and presented research on the risk to personnel of disease.



Safety in preparing and administering cytotoxic drugs, simulation of the use of closed systems.



Andreja Eberl  
MPharm

In her lecture 'How to establish and run a cytotoxic preparation unit', Ms Eva Hartvig-Honoré, working in a large hospital pharmacy in the capital region in Denmark, set out the principles of planning rooms for cytotoxic drug preparation. She reinforced the need to monitor the production of cytotoxic drugs. As many hospitals in Slovenia are currently building or about to build premises for the centralised preparation of cytotoxic drugs, the lecture was very welcome and provided a good basis for further discussion.

The second day was interactive, and began with a workshop on safety in preparing and administering cytotoxic drugs. The 28 participants watched a recording of the preparation and administration of cytotoxic drugs at the Institute of Oncology in Ljubljana, Slovenia, which provided the starting point for questions and discussion on specific procedures used in individual hospitals. The participants then divided into groups which simulated the preparation of cytotoxic drugs with a closed system, reviewed different administering systems, and shared their experience in preparing chemotherapy drugs.

The meeting ended with a discussion on the problem of transporting chemotherapy drugs. Currently, shipments of carcinogenic, mutagenic and reprotoxic (CMR) drugs are not labelled dangerous, and CMRs may be combined with other drugs, or placed in cardboard boxes. Everyone agreed there was much work to be done in this area. The goal is to make the transportation of cytotoxic drugs consistent with ESOP guidelines on safe transportation, which are also included in QuapoS. CMR drugs must be transported in safe and sealed impermeable containers marked with a logo that highlights the danger and carries a warning understood by non-trained personnel. We agreed that the yellow hand logo should be used; however, problems arise with regard to realisation, as there is currently no legal basis on which to compel wholesalers to indicate CMR drugs with a special label. As a first move, wholesalers will be approached to adopt the standard for transporting cytotoxic drugs.

The meeting expressed a desire to standardise procedures in hospitals. Therefore, a working group will be set up for the oncology pharmacy service to address the issue more actively.

## Authors

Andreja Eberl, MPharm

Monika Sonc, MPharm, spec. Pharmacy

msonc@onko-i.si