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Clinical Trials: What Cancer Patients Need To Know  
New Initiative in Italy

Clinical trials are an important step in the transfer of research results from the laboratory into clinical practice. In cancer, they test not only new treatment options but also supportive care approaches to achieve better pain control, to reduce side effects of treatment, and to improve quality of life. For this research to be done, patients need to know where clinical trials are being done and how they can have access to them.

On April 20, 2007, a workshop was held in Rome to discuss how cancer patients in Italy could become better informed about clinical trials. A collaboration between ICISG members AIMaC (the Italian Association of Cancer Patients and Friends), the U.S. National Cancer Institute and the U.S. National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine organized the workshop, which also included presentations from the World Health Organization, the European Cancer Patient Coalition, and the European Medicines Agency (EMA). The Italian National Institute of Health (Istituto Superiore Sanita) hosted the meeting. Two additional ICISG board members participated: Cora Honing from the Dutch Cancer Society and Marion Morra from the U.S.

Professor Francesco De Lorenzo, president of AIMaC, said of the meeting, "This was the first meeting of its kind in Italy. We wanted to bring together the medical community, scientists, psychologists, patient associations, and the media to emphasize the importance of access to information on clinical trials in Italy. From this workshop we will develop an information booklet on clinical trials for cancer patients that we hope will be used throughout the country."