



Dear Colleagues and Friends;

Welcome to the 18th World Congress of the European Association for Palliative Care!

It has been for me a great pleasure and honor to co-chair the Scientific Committee of this world congress, the first in person congress organized by the EAPC since 2019.

After two years of planning, organisation, meetings, reflection, and decision-making, finally, here we are!

Under the theme “Equity and Diversity in Palliative Care”, this EAPC 2023 congress focuses on understanding health inequities and diversity in palliative care.

Are we promoting equity in palliative care? If not, why are we failing on equity in palliative care? Do we spend inadequately or inappropriately on palliative care provision? Why in a world now much more aware of the impact of the social determinants of health are the world’s most vulnerable persons still missing out? Why are we still failing in providing increased or augmented palliative care services for socially, demographically, or geographically defined population groups with greater palliative care needs? How can diversity help to understand and tackle inequities in palliative care?

These are just a few examples of questions that will certainly become “food for thought” during our days together here in Rotterdam, inside and outside this lovely venue.

Through a rich and diversified program, this congress draws attention to the utmost need and goal of creating equity of fair access, opportunity, and advancement in palliative care for all people in need of this care, within a context of diversity.

The motto of the congress and the fact that this is the 18th World Congress of the EAPC make me think on two metaphors.

First, 18 is the age of adulthood. 18 usually signs the beginning of a new chapter in a person's life in many societies worldwide. An age of possibilities combined with new challenges and responsibilities. An age of dreams.

Second, in a world of symbols, 18, or the 18th anniversary, is also associated to porcelain, which is the result of clay being heated at extremely high temperatures, something of coveted beauty that comes from humble beginnings and walking through fire.

Having brought-in these two metaphors, the 18th World Congress of the EAPC and its motto reminds me, and hopefully all of us, of the foundational vision, values, strategies, dreams and passion of healthcare professionals wanting to change the *status quo*.

It reminds me of my dream of so many years now:

Making palliative care accessible to all those who need it, particularly making palliative care a reality in the Azorean islands (for those who are not familiar, the Azores is a small archipelago in the middle of the Atlantic, between Europe and North America).

While my dream is still not fully materialized, I have been lucky and privileged enough to seeing it become true in two of these nine islands (São Miguel and Terceira).

I have also seen this dream come true in other places in Europe: Lisbon, Oporto, Fundão (to only name a few in Portugal); Aachen, in Germany; Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (one of the pioneering palliative care units in Spain), Pamplona, and Barcelona; Gent; Bologna and Milano, in Italy... and many other excellence centers in palliative care could be added to this short list.

Today, here and now, I would like to remind us all of this common sharing. From junior professionals moving across the continuum of professional and personal pathways to more senior professionals, no matter how diverse we are, we all share a common vision, a dream: Palliative care for all those who are in need of this type of care, no matter where we are in the World, no matter what differences with have.

I am here today because of this dream.

“You may say I am a dreamer”...
... “but I am not the only one”

Thank you all for being here and sharing this dream and passion. I wish you all a very fruitful 18th World Congress of the EAPC.

Sandra Martins Pereira
Co-Chair of the Scientific Committee
18th World Congress of the EAPC