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## Current Problems in Cancer

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## Reply to: The challenge for nutritional care in a cancer center: The need for integration between clinical nutritionist, oncologist and palliative care physician

To the editor

We are grateful to Rossi et al <sup>1</sup> for reinforcing the urgent need for effective structural strategies aimed at facing the challenging issue of nutritional care in oncology, which we highlighted in our recent works.<sup>2,3</sup>

We are aware that many efforts are still to be made at institutional, educational and research level. However, we are quietly confident that progressive improvements will occur in the next future thanks to the collaborative researches mentioned by Rossi et al, which have been recently planned in the context of many Italian research hospitals with the endorsement of the Italian Ministry of Health.

We believe that evidence on the efficacy of nutritional support in cancer patients needs to be strengthened by appropriately designed and sized clinical trials. However, due to the unequivocal association between malnutrition and clinical outcomes, the paucity of randomized intervention trials cannot be an excuse to delay the implementation of practical policies aimed at improving the quality of nutritional care in oncology.<sup>4</sup> Appropriate and timely nutritional support is a right for every cancer patient exactly like pain treatment, which requires a multidisciplinary systematic management in every hospital engaged in cancer care.<sup>5</sup>

Therefore, we congratulate Rossi et al for the institution of their nutritional team, which is the initial key point to create an effective clinical network and optimize the management of nutritional treatment from hospital admission to the home care setting.

A recent observational study conducted in an Italian real-world setting showed that nutritional support is associated with positive survival outcomes in patients with gastrointestinal, respiratory, and genitourinary cancer, particularly when early administered.<sup>6</sup> It also further highlighted the urgent need for an improvement in the assessment of nutritional status in oncologic patients and suggested that awareness programs toward this issue should be implemented at multinational level.

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In conclusion, in accordance with Rossi et al, we believe that the existing gap between need and actual delivery of nutritional support in oncology must be urgently filled, in order to guarantee to all cancer patients the rapid improvement of the quality of care. Like every practical long-lasting change, it will be possible only thanks to the motivation, the efforts and the effective collaboration of a huge number of healthcare professionals, patients' associations and institutions.

### Declaration of competing interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest to report.

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