

el Periòdic News

TREATMENT OF THE DISEASE

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ESCALDES-ENGORDANY

The situation of many Andorran families with members suffering from cancer is becoming increasingly unsustainable, according to the Andorran Cancer Association (ASSANDCA). The delay in the construction of the radiotherapy unit in the country forces these patients to travel outside of Andorra to receive the necessary treatment, a fact that generates a great psychological and economic impact on both the patients and their families. The president of the entity, Josep Saravia, has once again highlighted the critical situation these families are experiencing. «For about 10 years we have been waiting to have cancer statistics», he lamented, making clear the lack of reliable data to address the problem more precisely.

Every year, more than 100 Andorran patients have to travel abroad to receive oncological treatment, a number that shows the urgency of having a radiotherapy unit in the country. Despite the fact that the project was approved in the previous legislature with the government of Toni Martí, and even a budget of 380,000 euros was allocated to start it, the current government has not made progress in its execution. «The radiotherapy unit is not a reality because of the current government's fault, because of its lack of determination to implement it», expressed Saravia forcefully.

ASSANDCA has also highlighted that, while places like Tortosa, with 32,000 inhabitants, already have a radiotherapy unit, Andorra continues without this essential service. In this sense, Saravia has explained that they have held several meetings with experts, including Dr. Ferran Guedea Edo, head of the Radiotherapy Oncology service at the Catalan Institu-



A man undergoes radiotherapy treatment.

ASSANDCA once again denounces of families due to the lack of radiotherapy

Saravia denounces the Government's lack of determination and calls for urgent

Cada any, més de 100 pacients andorrans han de desplaçar-se a l'estranger per rebre tractament oncològic

te of Oncology, who has offered to help throughout the process of assembly of the unit, from the installation of the machines to the training of the professionals.

In addition, Saravia has advocated for the creation of a day center to provide psychological support to cancer patients, following the example of Kilda Sant Pau in Barcelona. «Taking advantage of

the assembly of the radiotherapy unit, we are advocating to have a space to provide services to cancer patients», he explained, stressing the need for a space managed by the association and with both public and private participation to avoid decisions «shift policies».

With regard to childhood cancer, Saravia has recognized that the low incidence, between four

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solutions for patients

and seven cases per year, makes the creation of a children's oncology unit unfeasible, but insists on the importance of having adequate services for the rest of patients. Finally, he has denounced the inadequacy of current screenings to detect cancer and the lack of modern treatments for types such as prostate cancer. Saravia concluded by reminding that, «life is what has the most value», and called for the needs of oncology patients in Andorra to be prioritized, demanding that the radiotherapy unit finally become a reality in the country.

A reference center based on the Swiss model

The report on the feasibility of a radiation oncology center in Andorra, based on the experience of the Swiss Tumor Registry, details the proposal to create a population-based tumor registry as a basis for planning the resources needed for the treatment of cancer in the country. This initiative would make it possible to assess the feasibility and cost of a radiotherapy service in the country, designed specifically to serve its population.

The report highlights that in Andorra, with a population of approximately 82,000 inhabitants, it is predicted that between 120 and 150 patients would need radiotherapy treatment annually. This figure is compared to the



Josep Saravia

PRESIDENT OF THE ASSANDCA

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Swiss model, in which the average is one linear accelerator for every 200,000 inhabitants. In Geneva, for example, with 520,000 inhabitants, there are six accelerators, which corresponds to one for every 87,000 inhabitants.

Regarding the sustainability of the project, the report points out that the cost of installing and maintaining the equipment would be high, and that the financial viability would be condition-

nal on the increase in the number of patients treated or an increase in the financial return per patient. There is also the possibility of turning the center into a reference for nearby regions of Catalonia, such as Pallars Sobirà, Alt Urgell and Cerdanya, with the aim of increasing the volume of patients.

Finally, the report underlines the need to develop regulations in Andorra that guarantee the safety and quality of the service, similar to that of the Nuclear Safety Council in Catalonia, to ensure the protection of both patients and staff.

The Oncological Institute Baselga


In 2017, the Government finally decided to reject the proposal to build an oncology center managed by the Baselga Oncology Institute. This decision came after months of discussions and considering the conditions imposed by the center, which included the exclusive management of the service by external professionals, according to ASSANDCA. Even so, the Executive chose to maintain internal control of oncology services in the country, prioritizing supervision by the team at Hospital Nostra Senyora de Meritxell. This decision, according to Saravia, put an end to hopes of a collaboration with the prestigious Catalan institute, which had been one of the options considered to improve care for cancer patients in Andorra. ●

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