

## **C5. SEEKING A SECOND MEDICAL OPINION-A PATIENT'S RIGHT.**

***Andrada Pârvu, Anca Bojan***

“Prof. dr. Ioan Chiricuta” Oncological Institute,

Cluj-Napoca

“Iuliu Hațieganu” University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Cluj-Napoca

During centuries, seeking for a second medical opinion was considered being a concession for a patient and after that, in the middle of the XXth century it becomes a patient's right. Second opinion may have a critical influence on the diagnosis, treatment and prognosis, especially for malignant patients. The patient can benefit from treatment optimization and avoid unnecessary risks. Seeking a second medical opinion or providing one can cause ethical or legal dilemma.

Second medical opinions can be recommended by doctors, asked by the patients or by the private or public insurance companies. Patients often search for a second opinion, for additional information on the diagnosis and/or treatment options and the potential prognosis, which will help the patient decide what to do or not to do, where, with whom and how. Cancer patients denying their diagnosis are asking for a second opinion hoping that the second doctor will find a benign diagnosis. Physician asking for a colleague's opinion may benefit from less exposure to legal claims. For the insurance companies, asking for second medical opinions by the patients can provoke unnecessary medical costs, but these companies themselves are asking for second medical opinion (especially in western countries) because are trying to control treatment costs (eliminate unnecessary surgeries or other expensive treatments).

In our country asking for a second medical opinion is protected by Patient's Right Law and by Medical Deontological Code.

In western medicine, asking for a second medical opinion represents a common practice and many hospitals have websites providing information asked by the external patients. In these countries implementation of practice guidelines was determined by the need for seeking a second medical opinion, but these guidelines will not eliminate the consultation for a second opinion because every patient and every disease have particularities.

In Eastern European countries, the medicine is now centered on patient's autonomy, but a paternalistic approach persists. That's why asking for a second medical opinion could produce first doctor's

disagreement.

Few studies were done in Romania based on knowing and observing patient's rights. As we know, there is no research about second medical opinion. In an European regular report “The Empowerment of the European Patient – Options and Implications”, in the “patient's rights” category, out of 31 countries, Romania was situated in 22-27th position because our country failed to implement patient rights recognized by law and restricted or obstructed patients' rights to second medical opinion.

The presentation will reveal the results of a pilot study conducted in Cluj-Napoca Hematology Clinic that has the purpose of evaluating patient's view about seeking a second medical opinion. We have done semistructured interviews with 40 malignant patients. All of them had a suspicion on their medical care (investigations, diagnosis, treatment or prognosis accuracy), but only two patients asked for a second medical opinion, even if 20% of patients surveyed said they get less than half of doctor's explanation. Patients who did not request a second medical opinion motivated by the fact that it is not a common practice in the Romanian medical system, have not thought about it or did not know whom to ask. Asked to describe the attitude of their doctor if he would know that the patient asked another medical opinion, 32.5% of patients felt that their doctor would show empathy, 30% that the doctor would have a disapproving reaction and 37.5% could not answer. Regarding the characteristics of patients who would require a second opinion, there is a statistically significant association between level of education and the desire to seek a second medical opinion.

On the basis of this study, a number of seminars for physicians can be conceived to improve the knowledge and application of patient rights in practice and on the other hand informational campaigns for patients regarding their rights.