

The Valencia Declaration, May 1, 1995

Statement of principles and objectives of the ICCCP

One principle should govern our actions.

Our children are not 'cancer children' but 'children, with cancer'. They are not a subgroup but participate in the right of all children as established by the International Convention and legalized by the United Nations (Magna Charta on the Rights of Children, UN 1989).

Therefore, children have, by established International right, the right to survive, to mature psychologically, socially, educationally and spiritually.

Parents also have special rights and must be assisted and protected in order to serve as guardians of their own children's rights.

Children have the right to survive

In the beginning of our activity as an International Confederation fighting for the rights of children with cancer, we should focus our attention on a very important consideration that clinical studies have proven:

The survival rates of all forms of childhood cancer is growing steadily and now reaches 60% - 70% for many of the most frequent forms, but only if the children are treated in highly specialised pediatric cancer units offering optimum care. There is a dramatic drop in the survival rate in centers where care is sub optimal (even partially). This means that too many children that might be saved still die of cancer.

The European Subcommittee on Pediatric Oncology Experts has recently produced a very complete document developing the idea that every country should plan a comprehensive Pediatric Cancer Service responsible for the management of childhood cancer from initial diagnosis, through therapy to long term follow up.

Pediatric Cancer Units (PCU) should be established, directed by pediatric oncologists including faculties for pediatric surgery, radiotherapy, rehabilitation, blood transfusions, bone marrow transplants and psycho-social assistance.

There should be specified training and education of doctors and health professionals who are dealing with these children.

Children have the right to mature psychologically, socially, educationally and spiritually

Our children, who now very often survive, have a particular need for psychosocial support guaranteed to children to remain psychologically and socially healthy during the long years of therapy. An optimum level PCU therefore must provide this care to the child and his family.

Surveys of the care of children with cancer show that there are considerable differences in the standard of treatment in various countries of the world. There are many areas where care remains sub optimal, medically and psychosocially, and where children are not yet given the best possibility to survive.

We feel that our first aim as a Worldwide Confederation should be to join our efforts to ensure that all children with cancer are offered the same opportunity to survive and maintain their psychological integrity in order to mature and become well balanced adults and productive citizens.