



The Value of MedTech – European Parliament debate on heart failure: From early detection to better coordination



On 24th February 2016, the Italian Member of the European Parliament (MEP) Aldo Patriciello in collaboration with MedTech Europe* held a multi-stakeholder debate at the Parliament on the social and economic impact of heart failure. Policy-makers discussed with patients, healthcare professionals and industry experts how this condition severely affects people's lives and society at large. There was broad agreement amongst the experts that heart failure will have the

magnitude of a tsunami on the sustainability of national healthcare systems if not placed high on the political agenda. Critical elements to address this societal challenge include the need for early and accurate diagnosis, a multi-disciplinary approach to acute care, aftercare as well as proper education and empowerment of the patient.

“1 in 5 of us can expect to develop heart failure in our lifetime”

Ed Harding, Director of Health Policy Partnership, alerted the audience of the burden of heart failure: *“1 in 5 of us can expect to develop heart failure in our lifetime”*. In fact, over 50% of unplanned hospital admissions due to heart failure could be prevented. Symptoms of the disease such as fatigue and physical exhaustion are often interpreted inaccurately and only 3% of people correctly identify the signs of heart failure. The Heart Failure Policy Network was set up with the aim of creating a lasting network of engaged politicians and stakeholders in Europe, to lead significant policy changes to improve the lives of people with this condition. **They call for:**

- **Making heart failure a national priority**
- **Diagnosis and prevention for those at risk**
- **A Multi-disciplinary person-centred care**
- **Investment in tools and resources in primary care**

*“Heart failure hits you like a train, it's like being punched by a heavy weight boxer”
(Nick Hartshorne-Evan)*

Patient empowerment is key following hospital treatment

A critical factor for effective care and rehabilitation is strong patient involvement. *“Heart failure hits you like a train, it's like being punched by a heavy weight boxer”* - the audience heard from **Nick Hartshorne-Evan**, himself a **patient with heart failure** and CEO of the **Pumping Marvellous Foundation**, a UK-based patient-led charity. 15 million people suffer from heart failure in Europe, yet the awareness and diagnosis of this life threatening condition is still very poor. Even if accurately diagnosed and treated, it still takes a long recovery and enormous efforts to rebuild a life. Whilst patients may get excellent acute care, once they are discharged from hospital, they are often left alone, which can leave to isolation and difficulty in continuity of treatment. **Improving the patient pathway by ensuring support after discharge, e.g. through educational, community support and/ or tele-monitoring services** is therefore critical to restore the patient to a healthier condition.



Access to existing solutions differs widely in Europe

Dr. Paul van Haelst, Senior Medical Director Cardiovascular and Metabolics at Roche Diagnostics, told the audience that *“nearly 40% of heart failure patients will die within 1 year of their first hospitalisation”*. However, existing **diagnostic tests can help establish the state of the patient early on in the process**. This would be a cost-effective approach, considering the fact that the cost of diagnosis accounts for about 2% of worldwide healthcare spending, whilst influencing 60% of clinical decision-making. Revolutionary solutions exist today to prevent risks for a person with heart failure and therefore significant costs for the healthcare system. However, Europe faces major differences in terms of access and use of these solutions.

Multidisciplinary approaches needed to improve patient outcomes

Prof. Christophe Dubois from the University Hospital Leuven told the audience that *“pills alone... often relieve symptoms but they do not cure”*. According to him, one of the most relevant technological advancements has been that surgery is becoming increasingly less invasive for patients, including heart surgery. This not only means a faster recovery time for the patients leading to shorter hospital stays but therefore it also means reduced costs to the healthcare system. With improved technology we see that such techniques are moving towards being applied in not only high risk, but also medium risk patients. A coordinated multidisciplinary approach to research, education and clinical management is needed to ensure improved clinical outcomes for all people with heart failure.

The importance of further stimulating the debate on heart failure with decision-makers



MEP Aldo Patriciello concluded the event by stressing the importance of this debate with all different stakeholders in order to increase awareness and knowledge about the risk and solutions to address heart failure. He also recognised the positive role that medical technologies play in improving lives and containing costs for healthcare systems and society at large. He called on policy-makers to take action:

- **The EU and international organisations should be determined to ensure access to high quality diagnosis and treatment in the area of heart failure across Europe.**
- **Member States are invited to share good practices on how to prevent a ‘tsunami’ of heart failures across Europe.**

All stakeholders were encouraged to join the effort to increase awareness about heart failure, as well as the need for more prevention and access to treatment and care. This would further contribute to a positive impact on the sustainability of national healthcare systems.

Medtech Europe and its members will continue to be part of the debate on how to tackle the societal and economic challenge of heart failure in Europe.

**supported by St Jude Medical, Edwards Lifesciences and Roche*

