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Common Motion on SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) Outbreak

The Boards of the European medical associations FEMS and AEMH held a joint web-meeting on 20 March 2020. Having received the reports on the current situation about the SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) pandemics in several EU countries and on the situation of physicians and other healthcare workers, the Boards are deeply concerned and note that:

- the pandemic has not reached the peak yet,
- Europe is, at this time, the main focus of the pandemic,
- the European Union and most European governments lack an effective strategy and coordinated action,
- the elderly, the patients with pre-existing chronic diseases and healthcare workers are at a particular risk,
- there is a pan-European pre-existing shortage of healthcare workers,
- there is a pan-European shortage on personal protective equipment (PPE),
- over the years, the number of ICUs has been significantly reduced, causing ethical and medical stress which now becomes critical.

Therefore, AEMH and FEMS adopted the following call to everybody concerned and most importantly to all European decision and strategy makers:

1. An exhausted doctor or other healthcare worker cannot help effectively

- While we understand the need for a temporary derogation from the established working time regulation, the basic physiological rules cannot be altered even during the pandemics. It is necessary that an adequate rest is ensured to all healthcare workers that need to be on duty and the working time and working conditions in all its aspects (schedules, workload, rest periods, compensations) need to be regulated by mutual agreement.

2. An infected doctor or other healthcare worker cannot help effectively

- Covid-19 infected healthcare workers are patients themselves and must be treated with all due care and respect, so tests should be available for all healthcare professionals and their families and used as often as needed. If positive they cannot be included into the teams while sick, even if the course of their disease is mild and even not in SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) specialized departments.

3. A doctor or other healthcare worker without the personal protective equipment cannot help effectively.

- It is mandatory that sufficient quantities of PPE are available, especially in the departments where infected patients are received. In addition to being highly unethical, it is a waste of a valuable resource to expose any healthcare worker to the risk of infection because such a worker cannot be able to help more patients in the critical time of pandemic.

4. The number of ICUs should be sufficient

- Sufficient ICUs with sufficient numbers of beds should be made available, in point of equipment, training and staffing capacities.