On the 31st of March and the 1st of April 2017, in the Nowodworski Hall of the Jagiellonian University Medical College in Krakow (Poland), the International Conference «End-of-life care for older people in long-term care facilities» took place. Around 200 guests from Poland and from abroad participated in the meeting.

The guests were welcomed by Professor Beata Tobiasz-Adamczyk, the representative of the Provost of the Jagiellonian University for education and international cooperation in the Medical College, who expressed her hope that the conference would contribute to a better understanding of what palliative medicine is and that it would demolish the related myths.

The ceremonial opening was held by the Provost of the Jagiellonian University, Professor Wojciech Nowak.

With regards to the topic of the conference, he drew attention to the fact that the increasing number of older people in the society, which has been observed recently in the developed countries, raises the questions about how to treat older people more and more important and up-to-date, not only for Poland, but also for all of Europe. This talk was followed by, a speech from Professor Marek Sanak, the representative of the Provost of the Jagiellonian University for science and development in the Medical College, who welcomed the guests on behalf of Professor Tomasz Grodzicki, the Vice-President of the Jagiellonian University Medical College, and then provided an introduction to the topics covered during the conference.
On the first day of the conference, the preliminary results of the international research project PACE «Comparing the effectiveness of Palliative Care for Older People in long-term care facilities in Europe» which aims principally to assess the quality of care for dying residents in the care facilities in six countries in Europe, as well as the development of an efficient model of education and development for the staff in the facilities, were presented. The main aims of the project were presented by Doctor Katarzyna Szczerbińska, the coordinator of the Polish research team of the PACE project.

Followed by, Professor Tobiasz-Adamczyk who gave a lecture about the concept of health-related quality of life at the end of life. Professor Sheila Payne (Lancaster University) presented an interesting point of view on the influence of migration on development of palliative care.

In the second session, Professor Katherine Froggatt (Lancaster University) presented the results of the work on the mapping of development of palliative care in long-term care facilities in Europe.

Professor Lieve Van den Block, the coordinator of the PACE project, spoke about the lower quality of care for residents dying in Polish facilities which could be associated with deficits of knowledge with regards to palliative care. This is supported by the analysis of the Polish data presented by Ilona Barańska (PhD student).
Next, Professor Harriet Finne-Soveri (National Institute of Health and Welfare, Finland) drew attention to the quality of care for people with dementia and to the difficulties in interpretation of the results. The in-depth analysis of the Polish data in this area were presented by Violetta Kijowska (PhD student) and the Chair of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine (Jagiellonian University Medical College).

Doctor Jo Hockley from the University of Edinburgh presented the structure of the development and educational programme «PACE Steps to Success» developed within the framework of the PACE project. Following this, two discussion panels involving the project country trainers, coordinators from the care facilities and directors of these facilities exchanged views about their involvement in the study and use of the «PACE Steps to Success» programme.

The conference was complemented by workshops in the field of end-of-life care. During the workshops, the «PACE Steps to Success» programme was presented, with particular attention paid to efficient communication with the resident, identification of individual needs, assessment of pain and depression, as well as recognition of the symptoms of dying and coping with the loss of close ones.

The second day of the conference was dedicated to recommendations regarding procedures in case of different clinical states occurring in patients of care and nursing homes (ZOL, ZPO and DPS in Poland) which fall within the global campaign «Choosing Wisely» promoting wise clinical decisions. Leading specialists in geriatrics, palliative medicine and other domains presented the current views with regards to making therapeutic and diagnostic decisions in case of residents of long-term institutions and requiring palliative care at the end-of-life.

The proceedings were commenced by Doctor Jadwiga Wójkowska-Mach (Chair of Microbiology, Jagiellonian University Medical College) who focused on selected elements of control of infections in long-term care. She drew attention to the actions of the infection control team who should play a key role in achieving of an effective programme for the control of infections in long-term care facilities in Poland.
Professor Małgorzata Krajnik (Mikołaj Kopernik University, Rydygier Medical College in Bydgoszcz) presented the issue of avoiding persistent therapy in long-term care facilities and the necessity of acting for protection of the rights, the position and the interests of the resident especially in the situation where the resident is not able to do express on his/her own choices.

Professor Barbara Gryglewska (regional consultant in geriatrics, Chair of Internal Medicine and Gerontology, Jagiellonian University Medical College) presented the principles of pharmacotherapy for patients in long-term care.

These problems affect over a third of adult Poles and over 70% people aged more than 65 years as well as the question of proper treatment of hypertension in patients of long-term care facilities were presented by Professor Jerzy Gąsowski (Chair of Internal Medicine and Gerontology, Jagiellonian University Medical College). He highlighted that people in very old age and with the « frailty » syndrome should be treated in such way that it minimizes the risk of complications, avoiding polypragmasia, and taking into account their quality of life.

In the next presentation, Doctor Katarzyna Szczerbińska presented the preliminary results of the PACE project showing interesting comparisons between residents of different types of care facilities (ZOL/ZPO and DPS), and the similarities and differences in care for this group of patients.
Also, the topic of quality of life, care and patients dying in long-term care facilities was covered by Violetta Kijowska who presented in her lecture her own experience regarding delivering of the PACE project in Poland.

The next speaker was Doctor Piotr Sobański, the president of the European Working Group for Palliative Care in Heart Failure who works in the Palliativzentrum Hildegard in Basel. He made a presentation about specific challenges for palliative care in patients with advanced heart failure in long-term care.

Doctor Iwona Filipczak-Bryniarska (regional consultant for palliative medicine in the Małopolska region, coordinator of the Palliative Medicine Ward in the University Hospital, manager of the Clinic for Pain Treatment and Palliative Care at the Chair Internal Medicine and Gerontology, Jagiellonian University Medical College) spoke about the problems of using drugs with the purpose of restricting the patient’s awareness. She presented the existing recommendations regarding the use of therapeutic sedation in patients with cancer as well as the aims of end-of-life care.
The issue of end-of-life care in the context of education for the family of a dependent person was introduced by Anna Kliś-Kalinowska (the Institute of Nursing and Obstetrics, Faculty of Health Sciences, Jagiellonian University Medical College). She presented the aims and the results of the project „Damy radę” („We will manage”) carried out by the Foundation TZMO „Razem Zmieniamy Świat” („Together we change the world”). The programme offers various instruments such as an internet platform, e-learning application, guides, instructional films and workshops – with the purpose to provide care assistants with information, instrumental and emotional support in difficult care for chronically ill and dependent patients.

The next lecture was given by Doctor Teresa Weber (University Hospital, Kraków) who drew attention to ethical issues related to hydration and nutrition of patients at the end of life.

The topic of conversations with relatives of a dying person and the competency to recognize the symptoms of dying was widely described by Doctor Agata Adamkiewicz-Piejko (Chair Internal Medicine and Gerontology, Jagiellonian University Medical College) who pointed out that the quality of care for a dying person depends on how this person was prepared for the time of dying.

In a presentation ending the second day of the conference, Justyna Koniczuk-Kleja presented the current psychological models of coping with grief and giving support to the family in this difficult moment.
The conference was organised by the team of the Chair of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine as well as the Chair of Internal Medicine and Gerontology, Jagiellonian University Medical College, with the support of the Medical Centre for Postgraduate Education of the Jagiellonian University. The event was held under the auspices of the Provost of the Jagiellonian University, Professor Wojciech Nowak as well as the Prorector of the Jagiellonian University for Medical College, Professor Tomasz Grodzicki.

The conference was also held under the auspices of the European Association of Palliative Care, the Council of Medical Doctors in Geriatrics in Poland and the Polish Association for Gerontology.

Detailed information about the PACE project can be found at :

We also invite you to visit our profile on Twitter where you can find information on the international PACE team as well as read the first commentaries and opinions regarding the conference:

https://twitter.com/hashtag/careool?src=hash
https://twitter.com/fp7PACE