

A national health plan for cancer patients to avoid a wave of collateral victims!

Brussels, 10 April 2020 – **The crisis linked to the Covid-19 virus is currently responsible for a slowdown across the range of care needed in the treatment of cancer. As cancer is a major cause of mortality in Belgium the consequences of this must not be underestimated. The Jules Bordet Institute, the Belgian reference centre for comprehensive cancer treatment, would already like to draw your attention to the measures that will have to be rapidly implemented.**

The pandemic caused by the Covid-19 virus is at the origin of an exceptional health situation. Every effort is currently being mobilised, among the general population, in medical circles and at the political level. The Jules Bordet Institute fully supports and is fully engaged in this combat. Nevertheless, in the field of cancer many patients do not at present have access to the necessary care in terms of screening, diagnosis, treatment and monitoring of their illness. This situation, imposed by the urgency and scale of the current problem, risks being the cause of a second wave of "collateral" victims of the COVID-19 virus.

"Contrary to the viral epidemic, this second crisis is totally predictable. It is our responsibility to anticipate it and to envisage the collective measures necessary to limit the consequences. As soon as the pressure of the viral epidemic eases we must be able to resume optimal care for these patients. This is why, following on from the management of the present crisis, the treatment of cancer patients will require exceptional means, coordination and support from society as a whole," explains Vincent Donckier, Head of the Department of Surgery at the Jules Bordet Institute.

A number of actions will have to be implemented rapidly

- Identification of those health sectors that must be the priority when care returns to normal. Cancerology is one of these priorities.
- Drawing up of a national strategy to manage the priorities and ensure coordination between the various care sectors. In particular, facilitating the transfer of Covid-19+ patients requiring adapted care to specialised and equipped hospital services to enable services specialised in cancerology to intervene rapidly to provide accelerated and coordinated care for patients requiring the most urgent treatment.

- To ensure a rapid and safe return to a normal care service, in addition to protective material, priority access to screening tests for the virus as well as to serological tests to detect antibodies as soon as these become available. The combination of these two types of test is a necessary precondition for progressively reintroducing patients and care staff to the active circuit by identifying non-contagious persons and also protected persons.
- The activation of exceptional resources, including financial, to support this relaunch. At every level, healthcare staff and hospitals will emerge exhausted from the present period.

"Without any doubt, the present priority remains to do everything possible to limit the effects of the epidemic linked to the COVID-19 virus. We nevertheless believe that we must already anticipate what is to come. The only way to confront what risks being a second crisis is by working together. This will require assistance from all actors in society. Compared with the sudden appearance of the viral epidemic, we have the decisive advantage of being able to anticipate this second wave. We cannot allow ourselves to ignore it and must do everything in our power to anticipate it."

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About the Jules Bordet Institute

An integrated multidisciplinary centre, unique in Belgium, the Jules Bordet Institute is an autonomous hospital devoted exclusively to cancer.

For 80 75 years, the Jules Bordet Institute has been providing its patients with diagnostic and therapeutic strategies at the forefront of progress to prevent, detect and actively combat cancer. The Institute pursues three missions: care, research and teaching. Its international reputation attracts the world's leading cancer experts. Its spirit of innovation has enabled it to participate in the development and discovery of major new methods of diagnosis and treatment with the aim of bringing the findings to the patient as rapidly as possible.

In May 2018, the Jules Bordet Institute received official accreditation and designation from the OECI (Organisation of European Cancer Institutes) as a "Comprehensive Cancer Centre", a quality label reserved for multidisciplinary cancer care institutions whose activities include research and teaching. The only Comprehensive Cancer Center accredited by the OECI in Belgium.

The Jules Bordet Institute is a member of the Iris and Université Libre de Bruxelles hospital networks. With its 160 beds dedicated exclusively to cancer patients, every year the Institute treats more than 6,000 in-patients., 15,000 out-patients and provides 84,000 consultations. To effectively meet future demographic and scientific developments, a new Bordet Institute is being built on the ULB Anderlecht campus, next to the Erasmus Hospital. Inauguration is scheduled for the end of 2021.

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Jules Bordet Instituut, Ziekenhuisvereniging van Brussel onderworpen aan de wet van 8 juli 1976



About the Friends of the Bordet Institute

For more than 50 years, "The Friends of the Bordet Institute" have been financing research against cancer research at the Jules Bordet Institute, the reference centre in the fight against cancer in Belgium and abroad. As the Institute's biggest private donor, it has given close to 13 million euros to the Institute in the past five years.

Considerable progress has been made in the field of oncology in recent years. Our understanding of the biological origin of cancer is growing all the time. Whereas 10 years ago we spoke of the microscopic analysis of tumours, today we speak of genetic profile, of sequencing, etc. Dozens of new molecules and markers have been developed, permitting the advent of personalised treatment. This progress has to a large extent been made possible through the extraordinary technological progress of recent years. But these new techniques that now enable us to probe the infinitesimally small are increasingly expensive.

For more than 50 years, the help of the "Friends" has enabled the Jules Bordet Institute to pursue its research using the most advanced technologies, thereby providing patients with the most innovative screening and treatment techniques. Techniques that generate life and hope.

By helping and supporting "The Friends of the Bordet Institute" you are participating in the many research programmes that they support and that all pursue a single aim: victory for life.

To find out more about the association The Friends of the Jules Bordet Institute, go to the website www.amis-bordet.be
To find out more about the "101 tables pour la vie", go to the website www.101tables.com