
CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

Fifty shades of Rose - an integrated and holistic care approach for patients with cancer and their families

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1: A touch of Rose Vzw, Bornem, Belgium

Fifty Shades of Rose

The Flemish drop-in houses for cancer patients and their loved ones (henceforth both called 'guests') are safe spaces where guests can benefit from complementary care to regain some control over their lives instead of only experiencing the ongoing (medical) rollercoaster. We show how these houses represent a vital part of an integrated and holistic care approach by elaborating on the philosophy of these houses through a patient journey narrative and 3 inspiring practices.

This testimonial gives a glimpse of the guest's perspective: 'The moment I first suspected my cancer diagnosis, I found myself on a rollercoaster. I underwent several tests during a period of terrible uncertainty, after which a diagnosis was made and communicated. A treatment plan was drawn up and before I realized it, I went from one treatment to the next. I felt abandoned by my body. Others took control of my life. My loved ones and I were faced with fear: fear of the treatment itself, of its side effects and even fear of not being cured. My treating doctor is best suited to discuss my concerns, but time is always lacking. I wanted to take some action myself to increase my chances of healing, but where could I find a suitable offer? Ideally, I wanted to spend as little extra time in the hospital as possible. And I wanted to hear how others struggle with all these questions and uncertainties.'

How can a guest rediscover the scent of fifty shades of rose during his overwhelming medical experience? At the drop-in houses, space and time are reserved for an integrated healthcare approach that also focuses on the non-medical aspects of cancer. Tools and support are offered to enable guests to retake control of their lives. All possible topics can be addressed through specific activities in co-design with the guests: from intimacy and sexuality to grief care, there are no taboos. And all this in a homely environment, a safe space away from the hospital context, surrounded by empathic volunteers and fellow patients and offering a very diverse range of activities that respond to the needs of every possible guest.

In Belgium, 27 drop-in houses that rely largely on voluntary commitment form a national platform under the guidance of the Foundation Against Cancer. They are all driven by one common goal: integrated care for their guests at every moment of the disease process, qualitatively and contextually within the guest's perspective, with a bridging function to the medical context and this in cooperation with hospitals and healthcare professionals. We present 3 Flemish drop-in houses as 'case studies', one with a focus on psychosocial well-being, one with specific activities on loneliness and one with their focus on grief care. Foundation Against Cancer coaches the drop-in houses in deepening their methods to help their guests regain control over their lives and supports

the houses in the necessary steps toward the government to anchor this complementary care as an integral part of the fight against cancer.