Partner Profile: HTA specialist

The Rheumatology Group from the Instituto de Investigación Biomédica de A Coruña (INIBIC)-University Hospital A Coruña (HUAC), led by Dr. Francisco J. Blanco, MD, PhD is looking for a partner to participate in an H2020 project in the topic SC-PM-10-2017 (Comparing the effectiveness of existing healthcare interventions in the adult population).

The full topic description can be found at:

https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/opportunities/h2020/topics/23061-sc1-pm-10-2017.html

The project will consist on performing a large multicentric randomised clinical trial to test the efficacy and cost-effectiveness of baneotherapy with sulphurous water (in addition to usual pharmacological treatment) vs. usual pharmacological treatment alone, in patients with osteoarthritis (OA) of the knee.

As can be seen in the full description of the topic, two of the impact points that the project should achieve are "the use of HTA methodology in the target group" and "to improve guideline development for prevention or treatment of diseases and the management of comorbidities"

OA has enormous social and economic burdens both on patients and NHSs, and some of the elements involved are very difficult to quantify in economic terms, particularly those relating pain, loss of quality of life and various aspects of psychosocial impairment in the patients.

The main hypothesis of the project is that this non-pharmacological therapy will significantly reduce the individual burden of patients, most importantly pain, but also that it will be a cost-effective therapy for the different European NHSs. Current available evidence, while encouraging is not strong enough to support this idea.

We believe that OA is a clear example of a complex chronic disease in which the implementation of specific HTA methodologies would benefit both patients and NHSs EU-wide, applied, in particular in the context on the present proposal, to the use of balneotherapy, but also for wider application to other non-pharmacological therapies.

This would serve multipurpose objectives:

1) Prove the cost-effectiveness of this particular therapy to influence decision-making bodies (fulfilling the two impact points mentioned above) and in addition,

2) Establish more appropriate HTA methodologies specific for OA in a EU-wide context

3) Further introduce the use HTA methodologies in general in the countries of the consortium that have less mature tradition with these tools

At this time, the project coordinator is looking for a partner, with experience in this field, to coordinate and perform a WP dedicated to development and application of HTA methodology to evaluate the cost-effectiveness of the treatment in our target group (knee OA patients), in collaboration with the other partners.

Confirmed partners in the consortium are Prof Antonella Fioravanti (Univ Siena, Italy), Prof. Marco Vitale (Univ. Parma, Italy), Dr. Romain Forestier (Aix-les-Bains, France), Dr. Tamas Bender (Mezokovesd, Hungary), Drs Mine and Mufit Karagulle (Istanbul Univ, Turkey), Sibel Demirgian and Magdalena Dumitrescu (Sanatoriums Techirghiol and Magnolia, Romania) and Dr. Francisco J Blanco, as clinical partners, working in collaboration with local spa treatment centers. A CRO (QPS, Spain) will also participate as partner to oversee the clinical trial.

The primary outcome of the trial will be MCII in VAS (or Womac) pain, with WOMAC total, QoL and other measures, to be defined, as secondary outcomes.

In addition, Dr. Blanco's and Prof. Vitale's will perform analyses on proteomic and genomic biomarkers, respectively, to correlate with the clinical outcomes, to stratify patients and optimise treatments. Dr. Blanco will be the coordinator of the project from his institution in Spain.