

# The Belgian government funds the post academic training in psycho-oncology, organised by the Cédric Hèle institute.

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## BACKGROUND

The Cédric Hèle Institute, Flemish Institute Of Psychosocial Oncology (Chi), was founded in 2004. One of the main objectives of the institute is to organise and coordinate education and training programs in psycho-oncology. In 2006 Chi founded a post academic training program in psycho-oncology, in close cooperation with the Flemish universities. After the second cycle of the course the Belgian government decided to nationalize and to fund the education program. This cycle started in 2010.

## METHODS

The CHI founded a steering committee which had the mission to develop a training program in psycho-oncology. This committee developed a two year training program. The committee exists of professors from the different Flemish Universities and clinical experts in psycho-oncology.

The training program is evidence-based and has an interactive set up. To complete the program the students have to make a scientific paper and to fulfill a series of supervision. The didactic skills of the trainers and the content of the courses are monitored. The program is evaluated thoroughly and evaluations are taken into account.



## RESULTS

In 2006, the first two-year training program in psycho-oncology in Belgium, for masters in psychology and medical doctors, was launched. 22 clinical psychologists registered. In January 2008 14 trainees graduated. In 2008 a second program started, with 25 psychologists. 16 graduated in 2010.

The overall evaluation of the training program and the evaluation of the specific training aspects, by the trainees were excellent. The Belgian government decided in 2010 to start funding the subscription of psychologists in oncology in the training program 'psycho-oncology'. 50 psychologists submitted their candidacy. 34 psychologists in oncology and one doctor started in the current program.

## CONCLUSION

The realisation of this post academic training, in close cooperation with the Flemish universities, means a breakthrough in the field of psycho-oncology in Belgium.

This innovating training program is an academic specialisation in psycho-oncology, which offers psychologists an evidence based academic training in psycho-oncology. It also helps them to improve their clinical skills in working with cancer patients. The program promotes evidence based practice, but also creates contacts between the academics and the clinical practitioners, which stimulates clinical based evidence.

## CLINICAL IMPLICATIONS

The psychologists who followed the program increased their knowledge and skills in psycho-oncology. They optimized their communication and clinical skills which will lead to a better care of the cancer patient and his relatives. The training program also stimulates the exchange of knowledge and experiences between the students and between the students and their teachers. Experience shows this is a very interesting synergy, with a strong intradisciplinary network and qualitative work as result.

## RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

With the training program the Chi and the Flemish universities want to enforce the link between the academic and the clinical world in psycho-oncology. During the program many academics teach their recent results in scientific research to the students. The psychologists in the program write a scientific paper on a relevant subject in psycho-oncology, which is published on the website of the institute. These can be a lead for scientists, in search of interesting research projects.