

Prioritizing care for high-risk COVID-19 patients in the EU: policy recommendations

14 November 2023 | 16:30 – 18:00
Room ASP 5G305 | European Parliament, Brussels

Speakers' list

Manuel Arellano



Manuel Arellano has been a chronic kidney patient since he was 4 but was diagnosed twelve years later. In less than three months, he underwent haemodialysis sessions until 1993, when he received his first kidney transplant. After that came many complications, two bilateral testicular tumours, operated in 2008, a non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, operated in 2009 and treated with radio and chemotherapy. In December 2014, he received his second kidney transplant. Over the past three years, he has also developed cardiovascular issues and osteoporosis. His education goes hand in hand with the disease. He started studying law, books and reports accompanied him during dialysis sessions. Then he obtained a master's degree in business management and marketing. These studies enabled him to work as a business consultant for almost 10 years.

In 2010, a legal inability to work allowed him to collaborate with the association of renal patients in Navarra, his home town. A year later he was appointed president of the Association for Kidney Diseases of Navarra (ALCER). In 2013, the association joined COCEMFE Navarra, a Federation of Associations of People with Disabilities, of which he was appointed president six months later. The representation of this entity, which welcomes the largest number of disabilities in the area, made it possible for him to join CERMI Navarra, a Confederation of people with all types of disabilities representing all people with disabilities in Navarre, of which he has been vice-president since 2015. In 2018, he was also elected vice-president of the board of the Spanish Federation of Renal Patients (FNA ALCER). FNA ALCER is part of the Spanish Platform of Patient Organisations (POP) and at the October 2018 assembly he was proposed as vice-president. Since 2021, he has been a board member of the European Patient Forum (EPF).

Brando Benifei



Brando Benifei is an Italian MEP in his second term of office, currently Head of Delegation of the Democratic Party (S&D) in the European Parliament. He has been working on health issues since the last legislature and is currently Vice-President of the European Parliament's Heart Group. Member of the interest group on Kidney Health and Antibiotic Resistance. Since its establishment in 2015, he has also been a member of the MEPs' interest group on "Patients' Rights and Cross-Border Healthcare", of which he is Co-Chair since 2019.

Sarada Das



Sarada Das is the Secretary General of the Standing Committee of European Doctors (CPME). CPME represents national medical associations across Europe and is committed to contributing the medical profession's point of view to EU and European policy-making through pro-active cooperation on a wide range of health and healthcare related issues.

Ms Das has been working for CPME since 2009 and has i.a. assisted the CPME membership in its activities relating to professional practice and ethics.

Ms Das holds a B.A. in European Studies and an LL.M. in European Law from Maastricht University, as well as an M.Sc. in Business Economics and Management from KU Leuven.

Igor Grzesiak



Igor Grzesiak is the Vice President of the Polish Institute for Patients' Rights & Health Education. He is a member of the Supreme Bioethics Committee at the Medical Research Agency and a member of the

Working Group on Patient Needs at the President of the Medical Research Agency, expert assessing the Certification of Health Applications by the Ministry of Health. He represents the Institute in the work of the Patient Organization Council at the Patient Ombudsman and the Patient Organization Forum at the National Health Fund. In 2021, he was designated by the Patient Ombudsman to a team of experts in the project "Patient First — actions of the Patient Ombudsman to improve the quality of health services". Awarded by the Minister of Health with the honorary order of the Ministry of Health "For Merits to Health Protection".

Jake Harrison



Jake has wide ranging experience within the health sector, working with some of the world's leading health and life science sector clients over the last 6 years. Including, AstraZeneca, Bristol Myers Squibb, Reckitt, ABPI, Novo Nordisk and Smith and Nephew.

Prior to joining Stripe, Jake has worked for Cancer Research UK, Obesity Health Alliance, Matter Innovation, the Confederation of British Industry as the health and life science policy lead and most recently at senior manager at MHP Group, undertaking senior roles in policy advisory, research, programme management, and consultancy.

Amongst representing the health clients in front of key political influences, Jake's proudest achievements lie within research writing and publications. As an author for the Business Framework for Health report; CBI's leading editor and policy steer for the ABPI Enhancing the Life Sciences Ecosystem in the West Midlands report; and leading policy steer for The Seize the Moment Strategy in collaboration with McKinsey, to name a few.

Jake also has extensive experience leading programs in health disciplines including, but not limited to: health equity, neurodiversity, oncology, obesity, immunology, and cooperate health strategy

Ilaria Passarani



Ilaria Passarani is Secretary General of PGEU, the organization representing European community pharmacists. She provides strategic direction and leadership to the organization while managing the day-to-day operations of PGEU, its ongoing relationships with member associations and other stakeholders, as well as representing the pharmacy sector in various European and national fora. She is a member of the Board of

Directors of EMVO, the European Medicines Verification Organization. Before joining PGEU, Dr. Passarani worked as Head of the food and health Department at the European Consumer Organization BEUC. She also served as a member of the European Medicines Agency (EMA) Management Board. She graduated cum laude in Economics from Bocconi University (Italy) and holds a PhD from the Faculty of Health, Medicine and Life Sciences of the Maastricht University (The Netherlands).

Martine Pergent



Martine Pergent has been serving as the President of the International Patient Organisation for Primary Immunodeficiencies (IPOPI) since October 2018 and has an extensive experience in patient advocacy. Her primary focus revolves around increasing awareness of Primary Immunodeficiencies (PIDs) as rare medical conditions and enhancing the accessibility of early diagnosis and personalized treatment options. She is deeply committed to facilitating the establishment of new patient organizations, with a special emphasis on low- and middle-income countries. Martine also places significant importance on the integration of advancements in medical and social sciences, technology, and artificial intelligence to the benefit of individuals with rare diseases. She ensures that all activities undertaken are firmly grounded in evidence-based practices and actively advocates for the incorporation of patient self-reported outcomes in disease registries. As a patient advocate, Martine works to ensure that the voices of patients are not only acknowledged but genuinely considered in decision-making processes. She firmly believes that the experiences and insights of patients can enrich the perspectives of other stakeholders, with the ultimate goal of enhancing the quality of life for those suffering from rare diseases. Martine Pergent is not only the co-founder, honorary member and still board member of IRIS, the French Patient Organization for Primary Immunodeficiency.

Mariano Votta



Mariano Votta is responsible for EU Affairs of the Italian NGO Cittadinanzattiva and the Director of its EU branch called "Active Citizenship Network" (ACN). Mariano has over 20 years of experience in advocacy, stakeholder engagement, European projects, communication, and civic information. In 2015 he led the launch of the MEP Interest Group "EU Patients' Rights & Cross-Border Healthcare," endorsed by nearly 100 organisations across Europe, and the MEP Interest Group "SDGs for wellbeing and consumer protection" in 2021. In 2016 Mariano has won the Efhre International University Excellence Awards on patients' rights and in 2017 he was appointed as Secretary-General at European Consumer Union. Along the mandate

2016/2019, he was also appointed by the EU Commission to represent Italian Consumer Associations in the EU Consumer Consultative Group. Mariano holds an MSc in Political Science and two post-graduate courses in EU Public Relations and Corporate Social Responsibility.

Kinga Wójtowicz



Kinga Wójtowicz is the Head of the RPP Brussels Office, a public affairs consultancy with a strong focus on healthcare. Within her work, she has supported various organisations in effectively channelling their messages to a wider audience. With a strong focus on healthcare stakeholders, she has gained a profound understanding of collaboration and information flow within the sector.

Kinga led the team that developed the Recommendations on Covid-19 Patient Pathways. This collaborative effort incorporated valuable input from key stakeholders.

Mariam Zaidi



Mariam Zaidi is a broadcaster and journalist based in London. She has worked in Asia and Europe.

Covering global news and current affairs, she is also an EU specialist. From Brussels she covered the EU for several years as a foreign correspondent. Most notably during the Brexit years. Currently she is a news presenter for TRT World in London.

She helped steer coverage on the Ukraine war, Covid-19 pandemic and energy crisis for Euronews as a main presenter from their HQ in France. In January 2023 she co-presented for CNBC's live events from Davos 2023.

As a seasoned moderator and master of ceremonies for NBC Universal, EU policy based Euractiv, EU institutions and global corporate clients she is a master of many trades covering tech, AI, health, sustainability, agri-food, EU-US policy and more.

A law grad with an MA in Journalism from City University London, she has worked for the BBC, ITV, CGTN, APTN.

The event is realized thanks to the unconditional support of Pfizer.



Media Partners:

