

"Stroke prevention & life after stroke, during the pandemic".

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OPENING REMARKS

By Mariano Votta

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Good morning and greetings from Rome also from me.

In the development of a policy and advocacy activity at every level, local, national, and European, we believe it is essential to invest in training and to devote quality time to be more updated, which are fundamental pre-conditions to be more active and effective in our advocacy activity. A duly informed patient is certainly a citizen capable of asserting his or her rights in the best way possible, and the same is true for a civic association: the more it knows, the better it will be able to act to protect the common interest. From this perspective, we are very happy that this initiative has attracted a number of leaders of PAGs even greater than we thought. Thank you all very much.

For what concerns my association, over the last 15 years, [Cittadinanzattiva](#) has been increasing its contribution for the prevention of cardiovascular diseases through actions at the national and - thanks to our European branch [Active Citizenship Network](#) - also at the EU level. This has allowed us to broaden our knowledge, but it has also made us aware of the deep discrepancy existing with regards to the level of information, skills & specific competences, incisiveness of the output and outcomes, between the associations that are devoted - almost exclusively - to CVDs and those patients' rights associations which do not have specific competences in these thematic areas.

Consequently, we have decided to contribute to fill - at least partially - this divide and, at the same time, to increase the awareness of a growing number of patients' rights associations on the importance of the prevention and management of pathologies

correlated to cardiovascular protection, as well as on the new available therapeutic options today.

In particular, our project focused on stroke could be considered the ideal follow up of the multi annual EU project on cardiovascular disease called “Increasing consciousness and access to treatment, reducing the burden of cardiovascular diseases across Europe”, realized between 2019 and 2021 with the support of 3 EU skilled networks (including [SAFE-Stroke Alliance for Europe](#) and European Congenital Heart Disease Organisation, here present today with us in the panel), the scientific support of the Italian Society of HCPs and 20 organizations coming from 15 Countries. High-level experts can confirm that in the European Union, stroke is the second most common cause of death and a leading cause of adult disability. Mainly because of population aging and improved survival rates, it is estimated that the prevalence of patients living with stroke in the EU will increase by 27% between 2017 and 2047. Therefore, if we want to reduce the future increase in the burden of stroke, it is imperative to make more significant efforts to prevent stroke.

Personally, I am convinced that, even more in this historical moment, prevention activities, on one side, and chronic patient care on the other must go hand in hand with the progress being made in the fight against Covid-19. Especially if, as today, in occasion of the Annual “[World Stroke Day](#)”, we are talking about heart disease & stroke burden, which are the leading causes of death in the world, and the Covid-19 risks to expand this primacy.

I am curious to learn more about this as well. I would therefore like to thank in advance the experts who accepted our invitation to share some of their knowledge, and my colleague Daniela who will be moderating.

I wish us all a fruitful training seminar.