

“NON-FAILING HEART” CAMPAIGN TO INCREASE AWARENESS AND EMPOWERMENT ABOUT HEART FAILURE IN SLOVENIA – HEART FAILURE AWARENESS DAYS 2021 ACTIVITIES

The Heart Failure Awareness and Empowerment Programme in Slovenia started in 2017 and is coordinated by General Hospital Murska Sobota (GHMS) and Centre for Health and Development Murska Sobota (CHD MS). Program is supported by the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Slovenia and the City Municipality of Murska Sobota. As in previous years, our activities culminate in Heart Failure Awareness Days period; in 2021, main focus was COVID-19 but we also included several other aspects as described in this report and at the official website www.nepopustljivo-srce.si (in Slovene).

Our Heart Failure Awareness and Empowerment Programme is generally divided into three sections:

1. Empowerment and education of heart failure patients and their informal caregivers for better self-care and achieving higher quality of life.
2. Awareness raising and education of health experts on heart failure and conducting research in different areas of work with patients and their informal caregivers.
3. “Non-failing Heart” campaign for raising awareness of heart failure on regional (Pomurje region) and national level among general public.

Heart Failure Awareness Days 2021

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021, we were very limited in organizing different events involving gathering of larger number of people on the same place, as we did in years 2018 and 2019. This is why we decided to move most of the heart failure awareness raising and empowerment activities online, together with guidelines on the prevention of SARS-CoV-2 infection spreading and newest information on possible complications for patients with cardiovascular diseases in combination with COVID-19 and advice about recommended protective behaviour. The Heart Failure Awareness Days 2021 were divided in following sets of activities:

1. *Raising awareness on heart failure and empowerment of patients and their informal caregivers by recording and publishing online video conversations with medical experts*

The aim was to answer most common open questions regarding heart failure and COVID-19 pandemic through recorded conversations with selected different medical specialists. The team of the Programme was collecting questions from the target groups and clustered them into different fields of medical specialities. Those questions were then answered in conversation with selected medical specialist, respectively. We recorded 4 different videos with 4 selected specialists:

- Interview with Emil Pal, MD, PhD, Head of Department of Infectious Diseases at GHMS on what is COVID-19, what is causing it and how we treat it. We also wanted to know, if patients with chronic diseases are more exposed for being infected by SARS-CoV-2 and if the disease is more dangerous to them.

- Interview with Prof. Mitja Lainščak, MD, PhD, Head of Division of Cardiology at GHMS. In conversation we received useful advice and information for patients with cardiovascular diseases (including heart failure) about limitations of treatment of patients with chronic (cardiovascular) diseases in health care institutions during the COVID-19 pandemic. We also received advice when, as a heart failure patient, should we urgently seek medical attention no matter the limitations of access to healthcare system.
- Interview with Assist. Prof. Jerneja Farkaš Lainščak, MD, PhD, Head of Department of Research at GHMS about recommended behaviours for effective self-care for patients with heart failure and what are the recommended behaviours for preventing the spreading of infection with SARS-CoV-2. We asked her also, against which diseases should patients with chronic diseases get vaccinated and if patients with chronic disease are a priority when vaccinating against COVID-19.
- Interview with Assist. Daniel Grabar, MD, Director of GHMS about general access to healthcare system and how treatment is organized in GHMS in times of COVID-19 pandemic.

Video conversations were published during Heart Failure Awareness Days on our website www.nepopustljivo-srce.si and promoted on social media and are, all combined, almost 1 hour long.

In this set of activities, we also decided to translate the document “COVID-19 Vaccine Information for Patients with Cardiovascular Disease”, published by European Society of Cardiology and publish it on our website in Slovenian language (www.nepopustljivo-srce.si/zivljenje-s-srcnim-popuscanjem).



2. Promotion of Heart Failure Awareness and Empowerment Programme ambassadors

In May 2021, the new Programme ambassadors were promoted on the official website, supported by the social media campaign and acknowledgement at national and local level. The ambassadors are representatives of local authorities, civil society organisations of target groups and representatives of patients and informal caregivers and are very important link between experts and general public. Their roles are in informing and motivating target groups and general public to take part in health promotion and prevention programmes. The ambassadors in Programme are:

- Aleksander Jevšek, PhD, Mayor of City Municipality of Murska Sobota, representative of local authorities;

- Vijola Bertalanič, President of Alliance of Associations of Retired Persons of Pomurje, representative of civil society organisations of target groups;
- Angela Novak, President of Association of Retired Persons of Murska Sobota, representative of civil society organisations of target groups;
- Ema Mesarič, retired nurse and representative of informal caregivers (daughter of heart failure patient).



3. Webinar “Heart Failure Patient Management” for the nurses involved in the heart failure outpatient management in Slovenian hospitals

Webinar was divided into three content sections: Heart failure and kidney disease, prepared by experts from University Medical Centre Maribor, Viral infections with heart failure patients, prepared by experts of University Medical Centre Ljubljana and the third section was “Non-failing Heart”, prepared by experts from GHMS. The third section “Non-failing Heart” was in-depth and interdisciplinary presentation of self-care of heart failure, prepared and presented by Jerneja Farkaš Lainščak, MD, PhD, Anita Vogrinčič Černezel, RN, and Nataša Sedlar Kobe, PhD.

First presentation in this section with title “From Awareness Raising in General Public to Empowerment of Heart Failure Patients for Effective Self-care” was an overview of newest practices in heart failure self-care with emphasis on new practical guidelines for treatment of patients with heart failure, published in European Journal of Heart Failure this year. This was followed by presentation of purpose and methodology of research paper with title “Assessment of Needs, Knowledge and Skills of Heart Failure Patients and Their Informal

Caregivers”, currently the most comprehensive research in this expert area in Slovenia and it was conducted in GHMS. With that, the process of developing health promoting and education materials, based on the findings of the research, was presented. At the end of presentation, overview of awareness raising and empowerment of general population activities about the importance of early recognition of cardiovascular diseases and improvement of quality of life with the disease in the context of Heart Failure Awareness and Empowerment Programme was presented.

Next presentation in this section was titled “Knowledge About the Disease and Implementation of Self-care Behaviours in Heart Failure Patients”, where the results of the quantitative part of the research were presented in detail.

Even more intimate insight in the life of patients with heart failure was presented in presentation titled “Obstacles and Enabling Factors for Implementing Self-care Behaviours, as seen by Heart Failure Patients and Their Informal Caregivers” where the results of the qualitative part of the research was presented.



KVANTITATIVNA RAZISKAVA
INSTRUMENTI

- Z namenom raziskovanja znanja bolnikov s srčnim popuščanjem o bolezni ter izvajanja vedenj samooskrbe, kot tudi ugotavljanja zaznanih obremenitev njihovih neformalnih oskrbovalcev, smo izvedli **presečno pregledno** raziskavo.
- Podatke o znanju bolnikov glede srčnega popuščanja smo pridobili s pomočjo slovenskega prevoda **Nizozemske lestvice znanja o srčnem popuščanju** (ang. Dutch Heart Failure Knowledge Scale). Lestvica obsega 15 vprašanj izbirnega tipa (s tremi odgovornimi možnostmi), vezanih na splošno znanje o srčnem popuščanju, znanje o zdravljenju srčnega popuščanja ter znanje o simptomih srčnega popuščanja.
- Podatke o veščinah bolnikov glede samooskrbe srčnega popuščanja smo pridobili s pomočjo slovenskega prevoda **Evropske vedenjske lestvice samooskrbe pri srčnem popuščanju** (EHFScBS-12). Lestvica zajema 12 vprašanj, vezanih na vedenja samooskrbe bolnikov s srčnim popuščanjem.

30:42 / 50:04

4. Research activities

Our Programme also includes applicative research projects that can be used for Programme activities. This year, we focused on much neglected qualitative and quantitative aspects in heart failure. Very recently, a paper “Self-care perception and behaviour in patients with heart failure: a qualitative and quantitative study” was published in ESC Heart Failure (ESC Heart Fail 2021;8:2079-88). Based on study findings, it is important to tailor approach to individual patient (and informal caregivers), with particular emphasis on personal and social characteristics. This information was embedded into all Programme activities as appropriate, particularly in the Webinar “Heart Failure Patient Management”, website content and regular meetings with patients and their informal caregivers.

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ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE



Self-care perception and behaviour in patients with heart failure: A qualitative and quantitative study

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5. Public call for the best literature work on topic “Heart”

Together with the members of our network, we organized public call for selection of the best literature works on the topic of “Heart”. The call received much interest by general public, particularly by the members of Association of Retired Persons of Pomurje. Authors have submitted their works to the committee that is chaired by the Robert Titan Feliks, famous Slovenian writer and editor of literature journals. The winners will be presented at the Annual national meeting of the members of literature section, where also representatives of the Heart failure Awareness and Empowerment Programme will be present to congratulate and promote our campaign. Their works will be at our disposal for the “Non-failing Heart” campaign in the future.

6. Public call for best handcraft work on topic “Heart”

During Heart Failure Awareness Days, the Programme team also issued a public call for best handcraft products with focus on “Heart” and healthy lifestyle. We already have several member institutions of our network, who expressed interest for the call, and we are in the process of evaluation to select best handicraft works. All products will be displayed in a public

exhibition, and best ones will be used for future Programme activities as promotional materials.



7. Media campaign during Heart Failure Awareness Days

The second set of activities was a launch of intense media campaign on regional television, local newspapers and social media about Heart Failure Awareness Days and about the past and present activities of our Heart Failure Awareness and Empowerment Programme.

We had several radio interviews and our video conversations with medical experts were shown on regional television programme TV AS, that is also available in all other regions in Slovenia, with 3 repetitions of all 4 videos.

At the same time, we launched a social media call to join our heart failure awareness activities in our Programme to general public and civil society groups, which already resulted in thematic workshops involving literature and handcraft, focusing on health, heart and healthy lifestyle.

The Programme team took special attention during Heart Failure Awareness Days to promote the results of the study "Self-care perception and behaviour in patients with heart failure: A qualitative and quantitative study" published in ESC Heart Failure journal on March 15th, 2021, to make general public and families of heart failure patients more aware of the rising burden of the disease in the society. The study's findings were also presented in several local radio interviews.

We have reached over 10.000 people on social media and over 70.000 people through television shows during the media campaign.

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With kindest regards,

The Heart Failure Awareness and Empowerment Programme Team Slovenia

