

Guidelines for authors of European Association for Palliative Care (EAPC) documents and papers

Introduction

The EAPC have a long and proud history of producing position papers, white papers, guidelines, reports and academic papers about key issues in palliative care¹. Preparation of these papers is usually undertaken by representatives of EAPC task forces or reference groups, but occasionally by other invited experts or representatives of EAPC member bodies.

Most papers have topics which clearly arise from the work of a particular task force or reference group, but others are proposed by the EAPC board, or arise from suggestions of EAPC members. The purpose of these guidelines is to clarify the type, purpose and expectations associated with preparing a EAPC document or paper. EAPC documents, papers and publications are currently variously styled as white papers, recommendations, position papers, charters, commitments, toolkits, view/approach which can be confusing to authors and readers. This document provides clarification on the purpose of these documents, which document types will be produced in the future, and when they are most appropriately used.

Objective

To provide guidelines on the preparation of EAPC branded papers or documents intended for external readership.

To assist authors in understanding the type of EAPC document they are producing.

To ensure that EAPC branded papers or documents are prepared in a robust, consistent and high-quality manner which meets the needs of the international palliative care community.

To ensure that papers relating to the work of the EAPC are identifiable, appropriately catalogued and easily searchable for our members and stakeholders.

Principles underpinning the production of all EAPC documents

Contemporary and balanced: Papers and other documents should address issues of contemporary concern to the European palliative care community. Where possible, they should present a balanced view which takes account of different perspectives and the strength of the evidence available (see below).

¹ <http://www.eapcnet.eu>

European: The EAPC is a Europe-wide membership organisation and its written output needs to take account of the cultural, legal, professional and other differences inherent in palliative care provision across this geographical area. Where appropriate writing should reflect this range of views, or take account of the differences in approach across countries and settings. There are occasions where the EAPC needs to take a specific position which may be not congruent with the requirements of all member organisations, but their positions should nevertheless be acknowledged. Papers are written in English, but once approved and published can be translated to other languages using the EAPC translation policy.

Writing group membership: Whilst there may be lead author(s) of the document or paper, processes need to be in place to ensure that the viewpoints of those from a range of different cultural, legal and professional viewpoints are considered. This is likely to mean taking account of the geography of Europe (e.g. East/West and North/South differences), the multi-professional nature of palliative care (e.g. Physicians, Nurses, allied health professionals), and the views of practitioners, policymakers, users and researchers. All writing groups should have a nominated representative or link with an EAPC board member.

Evidence based: All EAPC documents and papers are expected to reflect a considered appraisal of the most robust and contemporary research evidence. We acknowledge that some areas of palliative care have an emerging or under-developed evidence base, and where this is the case it should be clear to the reader which elements of the document are based on research evidence, and which on other forms of knowledge.

Writing process

All EAPC Papers should include reference to the EAPC in the title.

The proposed title, topic, indicative content and writing method (e.g. consensus approach, systematic review, opinion piece) must be approved by the EAPC board prior to work commencing. This may be as part of a task or reference group application, or through direct contact with the EAPC board.

The writing groups (or as part of a task force or reference group update) must provide an update to the EAPC board on progress every six months.

The EAPC board must approve any paper before it is submitted for publication and should be consulted regarding the proposed place of publication.

EAPC paper types

White Paper	<p>A white paper is an authoritative report or guide that informs readers concisely about a complex issue and presents the EAPC’s balanced philosophy and position on the matter. It is meant to help readers understand an issue, solve a problem, or make a decision.</p> <p>EAPC white papers should be based on the most robust appraisal of existing evidence coupled with a method of understading the range of views under consideration. This may include systematically constructed reviews (of publishable quality, using acknowledged review designs) where there is sufficient evidence for a review. In the absence of a review they may robustly collect qualitative or quantitative data to inform the issue under consideration. This may, for example, include surveys of EAPC members or consensus work such as Delphi studies. The EAPC requires that such data collection requires appropriate permissions to be in place. This may include research ethics or governance approvals as required for the design and the countries in which such data are collected. EAPC white papers should include a summary of the main points made and any recommendations.</p>
Recommendations and/or toolkit	<p>EAPC recommendations are made to guide specific actions in response to certain conditions. These are typically clinical issues. Recommendations are usually made about issues less complex than those for which a white paper would be commissioned.</p> <p>EAPC recommendations need to be based on the most robust available evidence.</p> <p>Recommendations can also be underpinned by the production of an associated toolkit which clearly lays out how the recommendations could be implemented in practice.</p>
Charter	<p>Charters are calls to action about a contemporary issue which require people to sign up to certain actions or behaviours. A charter call to action should have specific, measurable, timely, achievable and realistic goals. The actions should, where possible, be based on robust available evidence.</p>