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Oncologists' voices in time of crisis: Findings from the ESMO Resilience Task Force survey series on how members can be helped and supported – a qualitative analysis

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Background

The ESMO Resilience Task Force has previously reported on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on oncologists' wellbeing and levels of burnout (Banerjee *et al.* 2021, Lim *et al.* 2021, Lim *et al.* 2022). With unrelenting pressures on our workforce and risk of attrition, identifying solutions to prevent burnout and protect staff wellbeing is critical. Here, we present responses from survey respondents on how they believe they could be helped and supported through the pandemic and beyond.

Methods

We previously conducted three online surveys on oncologists' perspectives during COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2021). For all surveys, an open-ended question asked: "What would help you? Do you have any suggestions about how ESMO can help support you during COVID-19?". In Survey III, an additional open-ended question asked participants to describe what "pleasant working conditions" were to them as this was a recurring response in earlier surveys. Responses from almost a thousand participants (N=991; Survey I n=463, Survey II n=232, Survey III n=296) were imported into the qualitative software NVivo (v12) and a thematic analysis was performed using Braun and Clarke's six-step approach (2006).

Results

Several themes were produced to portray the ways in which oncologists perceived they could be helped and supported. These were labelled: "training, learning, education and information", "wellbeing", "activism and advocacy", "financial support", "safety" and "opportunities and career", with "working conditions and job role", "safety", "wellbeing and coping", "working relations and support from others", and "career and professional development" important for having a pleasant physical working condition. Numerous suggestions were made within each theme, which this presentation will detail.

Conclusions

This qualitative study highlight numerous suggestions by which oncologists could be helped in a crisis such as the pandemic, including action points for ESMO, and other key stakeholders such as governments and employing hospitals/institutions. These will guide recommendations to address the profession's challenges and help achieve a healthy and resilient global oncology workforce.