

Rod Mitchell

Chairman, European Federation of Crohn's and Ulcerative Colitis Associations (EFCCA)



Introduction

Rod Mitchell is the current Chairman of the European Federation of Crohn's and Ulcerative Colitis (Patients) Associations – EFCCA a Belgian registered umbrella association comprising, as of June 2005, twenty-two national Crohn's and colitis associations across Europe.

Following the diagnosis of Crohn's disease in his wife, Myra, now more than 35 years ago, both came increasingly interested in learning more about the then rare disease. Since those far off days and as with many assisting patient organisations, Rod Mitchell gradually became more actively involved in the UK's Crohn's and colitis patient association both locally and nationally ... and was one time Chairman of the National Association for Colitis and Crohn's disease. and of the 60+ NACC Area Groups around the UK. Because of a growing interest in the wider field of inflammatory bowel disease - IBD since 1995 he has been working in a voluntary capacity for EFCCA, firstly as its Treasurer and since 1998 as EFCCA Chairman.

He is an early retired banker but has also some experience of local government finance and other not for profit organisations in the UK.

As Chairman of EFCCA he has a wider than normal role as the organisation does not have paid assistance and only a small Executive (Management) Committee. For the past 10 years he has actively aided EFCCA's development by working at the European level and beyond, with and on behalf of the EFCCA Member National Associations. In the UK he continues to assist the National Association for Colitis and Crohn's disease in the UK as an Honorary Vice President and as Chairman of the NACC Area Group in his home county of Dorset.

EFCCA provides the Crohn's and colitis patient perspective in working with physicians from established groups such as the EC – IBD collaborative Research Study Group (EC-IBD) and the newer European Crohn's and Colitis Organisation (ECCO). EFCCA does not currently raise funds for Research but a number of the national Crohns and colitis associations do. It is estimated that there are more than 1 million patients diagnosed with Crohn's disease or Ulcerative Colitis Europe-wide. See website at: www.efcca.org

As a member of the European Disability Forum and of the EDF Chronic Illness Sub Group and of the European Patients Platform (EPP) with its open links to the European Commission and Parliament, EFCCA seeks to be actively involved. As a result of the genetic aspects of inflammatory bowel disease - IBD, particularly of

Crohn's disease, EFCCA is also a member of the European Genetics Alliance Network (EGAN) and recently EFCCA has been accepted for membership of EPPOSI, the European Platform for Patients, Science and Industry. Rod Mitchell is also a member of the EFPIA Industry Think Tank.

EFCCA maintains links with other patient groups and foundations across the world including those in the Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the USA and attends Congresses like the United European Gastroenterology Week - UEGW and the similar one for Paediatric Gastroenterology – ESPGHAN. EFCCA representatives also attend the important annual Digestive Diseases Week – DDW in the USA.

Rod Mitchell has also been a member of the International Alliance of Patient of Organisations Governing Board for some 3 years. Within its broad canvass IAPO provides opportunities for awareness raising of chronic inflammatory diseases and EFCCA's membership of IAPO benefits from its involvement with the International cross diseases organisation.

He sees the Patient Groups' strength in advancing patient centred care and the need for a shared care approach coming from a partnership between all the stakeholders. That is Patients and their Representatives, Families, Carers Hospital and Primary Care Doctors and Health Professionals and Industry all working together in a spirit of co-operation ... and for the benefit of patients everywhere ... whether they be regular subscribing members of Crohn's and Colitis national and local patient associations or not.

With the EU and an increasing number of national governments promoting a need for greater transparency and active citizenship and with health-care budgets under growing pressure he believes that there must be a greater understanding of how the patients associations and their representatives can help. There is a wealth of knowledge available and a growing breadth of experience, which should be harnessed for the benefit of all in society. He acknowledges that patient organisations are more likely to represent and assist those with a chronic illness but that nearly all of us or a member of our family or close friends will be patients at some time in their lives and will probably need their help.

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