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Italian consensus on a curriculum for volunteer training in oncology.

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Volunteers' education, together with selection and organization, are fundamental for an adequate volunteer service in oncology, which is focused on patient and family needs and is fully integrated with the activity of the care team. To achieve such an aim, well-defined requirements and educational objectives are essential. A curriculum for voluntary service in oncology was developed through a consensus of experts. By comparing the work carried out by six different teams, a questionnaire was drafted, which grouped 91 educational aims. For each, the questionnaire queried whether the aim was relevant or not, and, if yes, whether it should be pursued through (a) knowledge, (b) skill, and/or (c) attitude (with a possible multiple answer). To improve comprehension, the questionnaire was divided into five sections: (a) the association; (b) the disease, therapies, and care site; (c) voluntary service in oncology; (d) psychosocial aspects of the patient and family; and (e) approach, communication, and acceptance. The questionnaire was sent to 117 delegates from 93 Italian volunteer organizations who, during a period of 8 years, had attended a course for volunteer trainers held by the Italian League Against Cancer. As indicated in the letter forwarded with the questionnaire, the final document would report only the aims considered relevant by at least 70% of the participants. Moreover, the area(s) of pursuit (knowledge, skill, and attitude) would be stated for each goal when indicated by at least one-half of the participants. Of 117 individuals questioned, 83 (71%) replied. Of the 91 aims proposed, 60 were considered relevant, and a type of approach (knowledge, skill, and/or attitude) was suggested. The formative curriculum of voluntary service in oncology represents a consensual guideline for future training programs.