

## **Answers for Finland, provided by the Ministry of Health of Finland**

### **Which are the NCCP priorities with regards to rare cancers?**

The multiform nature of cancer and the central role of the genomic changes in the initial stage of the disease, in its progression and treatment mean that each cancer tumor is unique. Therefore, the effort to specify some cancers as rare is becoming more and more complicated. E.g. some of the gene mutations in breast cancer makes it a different disease (subgroup) from the more common ones, and can thus be considered rare. Analyzing the biological characteristics of each tumor increasingly facilitates the choice of treatment. Since the disease and pathology of each individual cancer patient are unique, treatment is always planned and decisions made for each patient, in cooperation among specialists of several fields: surgeons, oncologists, radiologists, pathologists, and cancer nurses working in cooperation. These teams made up of specialists, such as a lymphoma, melanoma, gastrointestinal, breast cancer, or uro-oncological team (multidisciplinary teams, MDTs), is responsible for the high-quality implementation of therapies for each of the various types of cancer, including rare cancers.

### **Where are rare cancer patients treated in Finland?**

Helsinki University Central Hospital (HUCH) Comprehensive Cancer Center is the largest and most versatile cancer treatment center in Finland providing personalized cancer treatment. The center is part of the Helsinki University Central Hospital and is responsible for the oncological treatment of all adult cancer patients within the Hospital District of Helsinki and Uusimaa. Pediatric cancers are treated at the HUCH Center of excellence for Pediatrics, in seamless cooperation with HUCH Comprehensive Cancer Center.

HUCH is also responsible for treatment of all Finnish citizens with difficult and rare diseases, and those in need of treatment requiring the most sophisticated equipment, such as organ transplants and many cancer treatments. HUCH Cancer Center, which is designated as Comprehensive Cancer Center by OEI (Organization of European Cancer Institutes) is Finland's largest cancer treatment center and one of the largest in the Nordic Countries. It has overall responsibility for the treatment of cancer patients, integrating the oncological treatment of all cancer types including, from January 1st 2015, breast surgery.

In Finland, there are no specific centers for rare cancers but cancer patients are treated in cancer clinics or cancer centers at the university hospitals (or at central hospitals); during the past decades, the treatment of cancer has been even more centralized to improve the treatment outcome.