

Associacio Cancer Support Mallorca, Report 2020

Would you believe it, we are already over halfway into January 2021, that awful year, 2020, has come to an end. Sadly, it doesn't look like the beginning of the New Year will be much better, but at least there is hope on the horizon.

So how did Cancer Support Mallorca cope during 2020?

Like most of you, it took us a while to change and adapt, and many plans we had were cancelled. For example, Anita Vince who arranges the yearly Walk the GR221, had two projects for 2020. Firstly, she was planning to take her group of walkers to Menorca to walk the GR223. And then, she was also planning a month-long event, where everyone who wanted to, could walk the equivalent distance of the GR221, but in smaller stages, spread out over the whole of April. Sadly, neither project became a reality, but they are still in our future plans.

Additionally our other regular activities, such as the Art Class, Knitting Class, fairs, markets and other events were cancelled. We were not able to access our drop in centres at the hospitals or even host a drop in centre at our own venue. But this does not mean that our work stopped.

We quickly saw the need to move online. Training went from being presential to online, and then by video, this was important as we had many new offers to volunteer, many during the first lock down, but others have joined us during the whole year. It was good to see how many were keen to help, in whatever way possible.

All our committee meetings since March 2020 have been held via Zoom, even when it was possible to meet together it was decided best to not do so to protect all our committee members.

And when it came to helping the patients, we moved online as much as possible too, nutritional consultations were held by video calls, translations were carried out over the phone, lonely and vulnerable patients received phone calls and messages on a regular basis from our amazing volunteers. We spent many hours calling hospitals, doctors surgeries, Town Halls, and other offices to obtain, cancel and amend appointments and process different aids and benefits for the patients.

During the lockdown we applied for and were granted with Covid19 Charity status, meaning that, where needed, we were also able to help patients with deliveries of food, medicine, personal protection equipment, lifts to hospital appointments, etc.

Thankfully the Govern Balear took this endeavour very seriously and we were glad to be a part of their program, and to take part in various training events they held and promoted during 2020.

As always, we worked alongside other Charities such as Age Concern, AECC, Yachting Gives Back and Looe United, to ensure that the local community had as much help as we could possibly give them, and we will continue to do so.

One thing that amazed us in 2020 was people's generosity, people were not only willing to give of themselves, their time and energy (in fact one of the hardest tasks we had was to convince those who were classified as vulnerable that they were not allowed to go and help patients physically) but the donations never stopped coming in, despite the drastic financial effect the pandemic had on the island, and our own fundraising efforts being cancelled.

We will be ever grateful to Richie and Ayesha from Radio 1 for their tremendous efforts in the Radiothon held back in June, and to Helen Pitt for naming us to be one of the beneficiaries of this event.

We must also mention the massive effort made by Phil Baber, who despite his own illness, swam 555km (the equivalent of swimming round the island of Mallorca), much of this was done during the colder months, in a small pool with a bungee attached to his foot. His goal was to raise €7000, and while we still don't have the total amount, we know he was very close to achieving this.

These are just some of the generous spirits that helped raise money for us in 2020. So a massive thanks to everyone who donated during the year, however large or small, we do not receive any state or local funding, so everything we have is thanks to you.

We would also like to thank our many volunteers, and collaborators, who have worked tirelessly to make sure that patients receive the care and attention they need. Last year we were able to spend less on professional services because we have had so many more volunteers willing to help.

Finally, a big thanks to all those on the Committee who have put in extra efforts during these times, they have also had to learn to adapt to new technology and different ways of communicating which has been a challenge, but there have been no complaints.

So what about 2021?

We start this year with the threat of another lockdown. This is worrying for us all, but for cancer patients it brings an added level of anxiety. Will they receive their treatment? Will they catch the virus while receiving their treatment? Will their already weakened system cope if they do?

And then they have the worries of spending another lockdown on their own, with limited or no contact with friends and families, with only their thoughts to keep them company. Add to this possible financial worries, and it can all seem very dire.

While we cannot remove any of these worries, our aim at CSG is to help the patients feel like someone is with them every step of the way. As they say a problem shared is a problem halved, so just having someone to speak about can make a huge difference.

We will carry on with online nutritional consultations, counselling and translations, in person, where possible, or on the phone. We will offer help with booking, changing, cancelling appointments as well as help dealing with the social services, and other entities to request financial assistance when needed.

We will continue to look for new ways to help cancer patients on the island, as well as offer help and care for their family members and friends.

During these hard times we understand that many do not have anything to spare, but those that do, can obtain one of our CSG Piggies, these can be found in a number of places (for details see our website) so they can save their pennies.

Amazingly there are still people willing to go out there and get fundraising. In April, Sean Judkins is taking on a two day challenge, The Mallorca Odyssey, where he will be running, cycling, and kayaking around the island. For more information you can see our website and the Mallorca Odyssey Facebook page.

We are sure as the year goes on, and hopefully conditions improve there will be many more activities going on, we will keep you informed of these as always on our website and Facebook Page.

Also we will be spending much time this year updating our training systems and our protocols, to make sure they are all inline with the Volunteer Law, and other applicable regulations. This is a tiresome task, but will helpfully ensure all our patients and volunteers receive equal, fair treatment.

How can you help?

We are always in need of volunteers, collaborators and sponsors. So if you would like to help out, send us an email and we can discuss what role would suit you best.

Please, please, please spread the word about us. Despite many years of advertising, and attending many fairs and events it's amazing how many people we talk to who have never heard of us. Then there are those who hesitate to get in touch with us because they think we are just a group of people who sit around talking about cancer. As this report has shown that is far from the case, so, if someone you know is suffering because of cancer, please tell them about us, encourage them to contact us, it won't cost them anything, and they don't have to make any commitment, they can be as involved as they want, but we are sure that we will have something we can offer them.