

Freedom of Speech: An Announcement by the Minister of Public Health

Livia Turco

Turco: Approval for the Regional test to supply computers to patients that have lost their ability to speak.

Regarding the request, which was advanced today by the secretary of the Association Luca Coscioni, Marco Cappato and the Honourable Maurizio Turco, to provide the initial possibility of supplying appropriate equipment for increased alternative communication for patients that are afflicted with ALS or other pathologies that have caused a loss in the capacity to communicate by speech, I find myself completely in agreement.

For such purpose, I would like to stress that since last February, it has been by my attention, including in response to previous requests by the AISLA, to solicit the Commission to revise the essential Levels of assistance as provided in the new Public Health Agreement, to prepare the revision to the nomenclature of the prosthesis, protection and auxiliary sanitary products, therein providing the availability of such auxiliary communication systems, and, furthermore, to evaluate the methods of accessibility to them by the patients that have an urgent need.

The proposal regarding the revision of the nomenclature is currently under examination by the Regions. Moreover, I maintain that it is important to highlight what has already been activated, more in a general sense, in response to the requests for assistance by all of the patients with grave chronic and debilitating pathologies which cause great difficulty regarding self sufficiency and for the same, regarding the quality and dignity of life.

For such purpose, we have instituted three working Commissions in which experts and associates of those afflicted with the diseases will participate for the purpose of indicating precise strategies regarding medical policies and specific solutions for the more urgent assistance problems.

In particular:

- a Commission regarding Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis that within the parameters of ascertaining the status of the services and assistance to the afflicted and their family members, will examine, during the next meeting, the appropriate guidelines regarding the management of communication for the patients suffering from this disease;
- a Commission regarding health and disability that will have a specific role in defining the new nomenclature of the prosthesis, protection and the auxiliary sanitary products, and above all, in the methods regarding its updating for the purpose of guaranteeing a more timely insertion of innovative products;
- a Commission regarding pain therapy, palliative care, and end-of-life dignity that will define the guidelines for the National plan regarding palliative care that is to be presented to the Regions.

Date: 2 March, 2007 - 9:00 p.m.