

The development of a webtool for health professionals to adequately refer oncological patients to supportive care

S.Theys¹ • R. Kiasuwa Mbengi¹

1. Cancer Centre, Sciensano, Brussels, Belgium

*With active participation of the members of the BeONCOsup thematic working groups

More people are surviving cancer thanks to better treatments. In Belgium, there were 472,360 people alive at the end of 2020 who had received a cancer diagnosis between 2011 and 2020. Yet, not all patients have equal access to supportive care (after treatment), mainly due to a lack of knowledge among the professionals on available supportive care services. This project aims at filling in that gap by developing a webtool that provides a reliable and up-to-date overview of providers and services offering supportive care for (hemato-)oncological patients in Belgium.

Methods

Phase 1 (finished):

First, screening of guidelines and literature to identify supportive care needs among (hemato-)oncological patients. Second, discussion with professionals and patients during 10 thematic working group sessions on the list with identified needs: (1) validate and complete the needs to be addressed, (2) develop the structure of the webtool, and (3) preliminary discuss the inventory of available supportive care services.

Phase 2 (ongoing):

- Screening of guidelines to identify the evidence-based supportive care interventions for the needs.
- Linking the evidence-based interventions to the available professionals and institutions in Belgium offering supportive care.
- Developing an overview of the legal framework, accessibility to the social security system, and costs of the available supportive care services.

Phase 3 (ongoing):

Building a database with the contact details of the professionals and institutions or refer to existing ones.

Results

Phase 1 (finished):

- A list with approximately **110 needs and problems** among (hemato-)oncological patients was identified.
- The results of the thematic working group sessions seem to indicate that the Belgian healthcare system could offer supportive care for most of the identified needs. However, participants raised the lack of a structural framework and a common vision and systematic approach for supportive oncological care in Belgium.
- A **preliminary structure** for the webtool was developed (see photo).

Phase 2 (ongoing):

Started with screening of the guidelines to identify the evidence-based supportive care interventions for the needs. An overview of the level of evidence of the interventions per guideline is being developed.

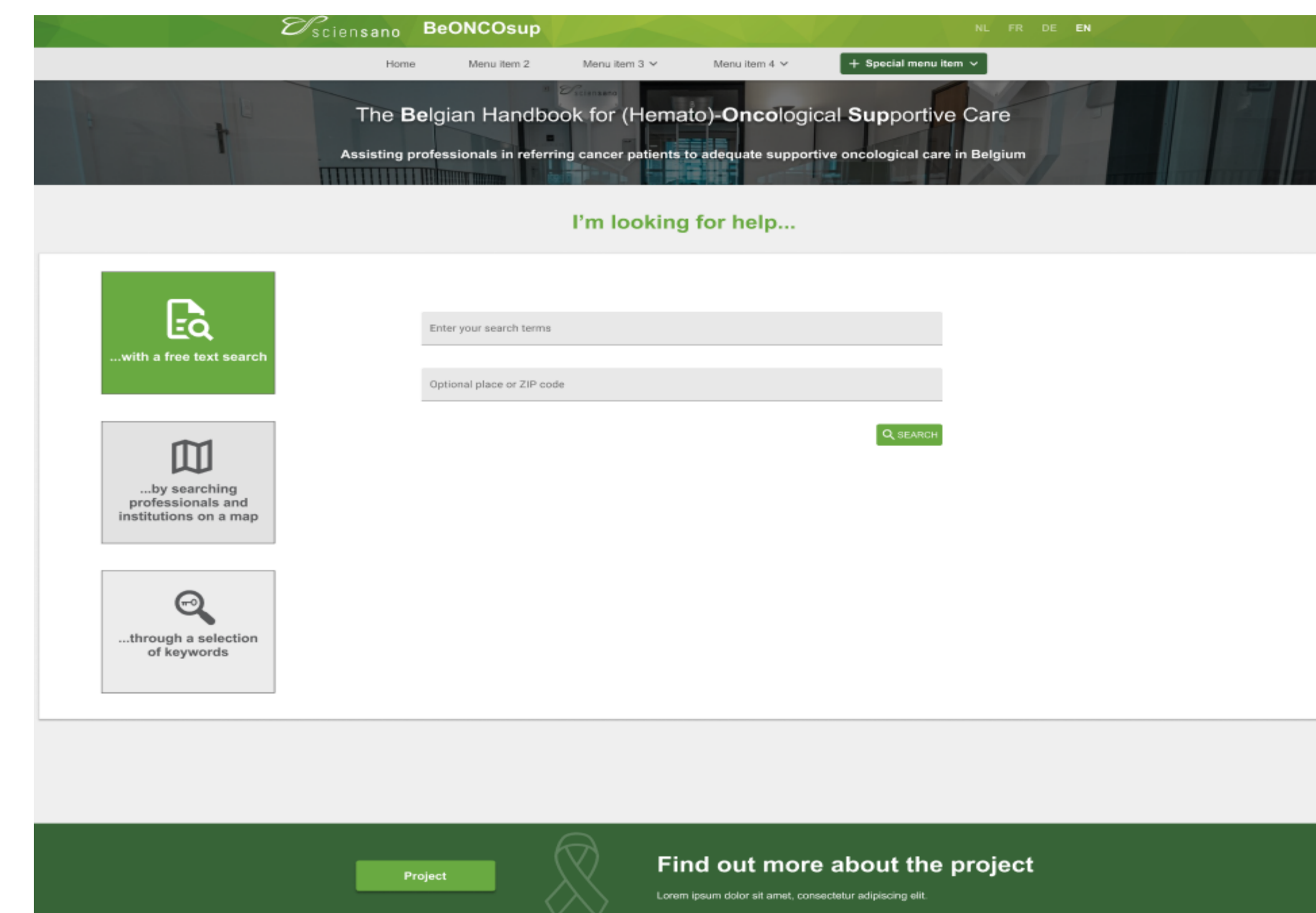
Phase 3 (ongoing):

A lot of databases for referring to professionals or institutions offering supportive care are identified but they are too spread.

Conclusion

The webtool will aid professionals in referring their patients to supportive oncological care in Belgium as it concentrates the information and databases necessary for referral.

The process for developing the webtool provides the opportunity to detect gaps in supportive care provision, leading to recommendations to better address patients' needs, encouraging structural approach and funding of organisation and research in supportive cancer care.



REFERENCES

- Régine Kiasuwa Mbengi, Sofie Theys, *Onco-hemato: multidisciplinair tijdschrift voor oncologie* (2024), 18(1), 3
- <https://www.dekamer.be/FLWB/PDF/55/2934/55K2934012.pdf>
- https://collegeoncologie.be/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/NLrapport_rondetafel_zorgnakancker.pdf
- Régine Kiasuwa Mbengi, Gabriëlle Schittecatte, Sofie Theys, *Is Cancer Survivorship the Poor Cousin of Cancer Control Within the EBCP (policy brief – under review)*
- <https://www.sciensano.be/nl/projecten/belgisch-handboek-voor-oncologisch-ondersteunende-zorg>

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to thank all the professionals, experts, patients, and patient experts who participated in the Belgian Handbook for (Hemato)-Oncological Supportive Care (BeONCOsup) working groups and contributed to the development of the project.