

Austrian Social Health Insurance Fund Österreichische Gesundheitskasse Receives Global Recognition for Achievement with Healthcare Excellence Award



Pictured from left to right, at Hanusch Hospital: Andrea Schlögl, Felix Keil, Erol Holawatsch, Nazanin Sédille-Mostafaie, Elisabeth Zwettler

New problems require new solutions and in early 2020, nothing was more novel than the unanticipated coronavirus. Accordingly, healthcare leaders across the globe united in new ways in order to help fight this deadly coronavirus. In Vienna, Austria Österreichische Gesundheitskasse (ÖGK), the largest social health insurance fund in Austria, were not only leaders in collaboration but in ideation with respect to new business models to help fight the spread of COVID-19.

ÖGK appreciated how paramount it was to ensure availability of health services, and maintain the health and safety of their workers, patients, and community.

Thus, a multidisciplinary team comprised of laboratory medicine, hygiene, infection control, and clinicians immediately prepared a safety concept to be rolled out across all ÖGK sites and Hanusch Hospital.

This comprehensive safety concept includes SARS-CoV-2 PCR testing, separate entrances for healthcare workers and patients, with patient entrance control and protective face coverings. In advance of any admission, all patients are screened for COVID-19. For all ambulatory patients and ÖGK healthcare workers, COVID-19 testing is performed if there is any suspicion of infection.

Despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, ÖGK health centres and Hanusch Hospital were able to safely reopen to approximately 90% capacity by end of July 2020 with no uncontrolled transmission for patients and healthcare workers. This is of particular importance to at-risk patient groups and the clinicians who serve them. *“Hanusch hospital is a focus hospital for oncological patients. Fear of the virus prevented many patients from seeking the care they needed. Early lock down in Austria allowed for implementation of effective safety measures for continued treatment for our most vulnerable oncological patients during the COVID-19 pandemic without risk. Infection rate in the hospital is low and fast testing allows identification of active infections in patients to avoid any further spread”* Says Felix Keil, MD, Head of Hematology-Oncology at Hanusch Hospital.

The integrated clinical care team who led this clinical care initiative was recently honored (in person) for their achievements and recognition through the UNIVANTS of Healthcare Excellence awards program. Congratulations Nazanin Sédille-Mostafaie, MD, MBA, Head of Institute for Laboratory Medicine

at Hanuschkrankenhaus, Johann Bartko, MD, PhD, Specialist for Medical and Chemical Laboratory Diagnostics, Felix Keil, MD, Head of Hemato-Oncology, Hanusch Hospital, Andreas Krauter, MD, Head of Medical Services, Member of the ÖGK General Management, Andrea Schlögl, MD, Management Hanusch hospital and ÖGK healthcare centers, Elisabeth Zwettler, MD, Director Hanusch hospital and ÖGK healthcare centers.

THREE KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Strategic, rapid and comprehensive implementation of SAR-CoV-2 testing within healthcare settings can substantially mitigate disease transmission.
2. Acting upon valued data for COVID-19 screening enables safe best practices for healthcare services, even in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. Collaborative efforts across ‘untraditional’ care teams can lead to novel thinking, opportunities and ultimately measurably better healthcare.