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Letter to the Editor

The new Italian law “A systems saving lives” the first European former application of ERC 2021 guidelines


To the Editor,

On July 28th, 2021, the Italian bill concerning automatic external defibrillators (AEDs) implementation has been finally approved (Fig. 1). This new law represents for our Country a fundamental step forward to improve community first responders' involvement in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

On June 14th, 2012, a declaration from the European Parliament called for a week of cardiac arrest (CA) awareness, to be held throughout Europe. Responding to the call, the Italian Resuscitation Council (IRC) set up the “Viva!” week,¹ which has become a yearly event in October in line with the World Restart a Heart Day.²

On March 2021, the European Resuscitation Council (ERC) released the new ERC 2021 guidelines. A new chapter titled “Systems Saving Lives” (SSL)³ describes important factors that can globally improve the management of CA patients not as a single intervention but as a system-level approach. The concept behind this approach is to emphasize the connections between the different individuals involved in the chain of survival, strongly recommending its implementation in each community.⁴ SSL encompasses a wide range of individuals, from the young student who learns CPR at school (KIDS SAVE LIVES),⁵ to first responders alerted through their mobile phone and guided towards retrieving the closest AED, to the

Systems Saving Lives

 Italian Resuscitation Council
www.ircouncil.it


the Italian Resuscitation Council proposals become an Italian law

THE OUT-OF-HOSPITAL USE OF SEMI-AUTOMATIC AND AUTOMATIC EXTERNAL DEFIBRILLATORS (AED)

1

Mandatory placement of AEDs in public administration offices, public sites (airports, train stations, ports, etc.) and transport systems


Art.



2

AED Placement criteria in public places (local needs and PAD projects, access and availability, etc.)


Art.



3

Legal protection for lay rescuers performing bystander CPR and AED use


Art.



4

Mandatory availability and use of AEDs during sport events (practice and competition) both for professional and amateur teams


Art.



5

CPR education and use of AED in schools taught to students (age 10-18), teachers, administrative and support staff


Art.



6

Inventory of all AEDs made by the EMS


Art.



7

A smartphone application for rescuer recruitment and AED location. National protocol for EMS dispatch-assisted pre-arrival instructions

Art.



8

Awareness campaigns on cardiac arrest and CPR, especially on WRAH occasion (October 16th)

Art.




Fig. 1 – Systems Saving Lives Italian Law.

EMS team arrival and continuation of advanced life support interventions on the scene prior to the patient transport to a CA center for high-quality post-resuscitation care. Every single step in this complex system is crucial.

The SSL Italian law takes Italy to the forefront in Europe with an impressive acceleration in the SSL concept implementation in the community. The spread and placement of AEDs to be available 24/7 in places with a high population density will allow their use at a higher frequency than in the current state. The legal protection of the occasional rescuer will reduce the bystander's fear of intervening in the instance of a witnessed CA. Even if not trained, the citizens will be guided by telephone through pre-arrival instructions provided by the dispatch center while waiting for the EMS. The presence of AEDs and the importance of trained personnel during sporting activities can avoid deaths in a health promoting context. Finally, the KSL campaign is now fully recognized with mandatory introduction of CPR teaching in the schools and October 16th will be officially the Italian CA awareness day. These are the eight articles of the law (Fig. 1) which can frame a systems approach to CA. A Governmental financial support is considered to allow massive AEDs implementation in the Country. Additional fund investments in technological development and defibrillator mapping will also allow for new and updated applications to alert citizens/first responders and mapping AEDs. In the upcoming years, this law will hopefully lead Italy to be perfectly in line with the latest ERC recommendations and potentially to save more lives. One goal, one Europe, one law to increase survival of CA victims.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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