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# Resuscitation

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## Letter to the Editor

# A system to save lives in Italy: A cultural challenge for community and government



Dear Sir,

The early AED use by bystanders remains bleakly low.<sup>1</sup> This finding is even more discouraging considering the high efficacy and safety of current devices. Several factors have been recognized as obstacles to a wider AED use: low accessibility, unknown placement, mistrust on defibrillation difficulties and concerns on possible hazards and legal consequences deriving from an AED misuse.<sup>2</sup> Currently, bystander AED use in Italy is allowed only after training although legal implications of AED defibrillation by untrained occasional rescuers have never been clearly addressed. With the aim to improve bystander CPR and defibrillation, Italian Resuscitation Council (IRC) called for a change on current Italian law giving an interview to a nationwide newspaper on Easter day 2019.<sup>3</sup>

Following IRC call to action, some Deputies of the Italian Parliament have started a formal debate on a new law able to facilitate bystander CPR and defibrillation mainly focusing on AEDs placement. Unfortunately, density of AEDs is only one of the factors affecting survival from out-of-hospital cardiac arrest (OHCA) and static AEDs have not proven to be cost-effective.<sup>4</sup> Most of OHCA occurs in areas not suitable for public access defibrillation (PAD) programs and a decreasing number of victims has a shockable rhythm as the first recorded. Therefore, IRC prepared an official statement proposing a wider and integrated approach, along with a detailed review of Italian laws. The statement, titled “A system to save lives”,<sup>5</sup> was officially presented by IRC Chairman at the Social Affairs Commission of the Italian Parliament during the formal experts auditions, on June 18th, 2019 (Fig. 1).

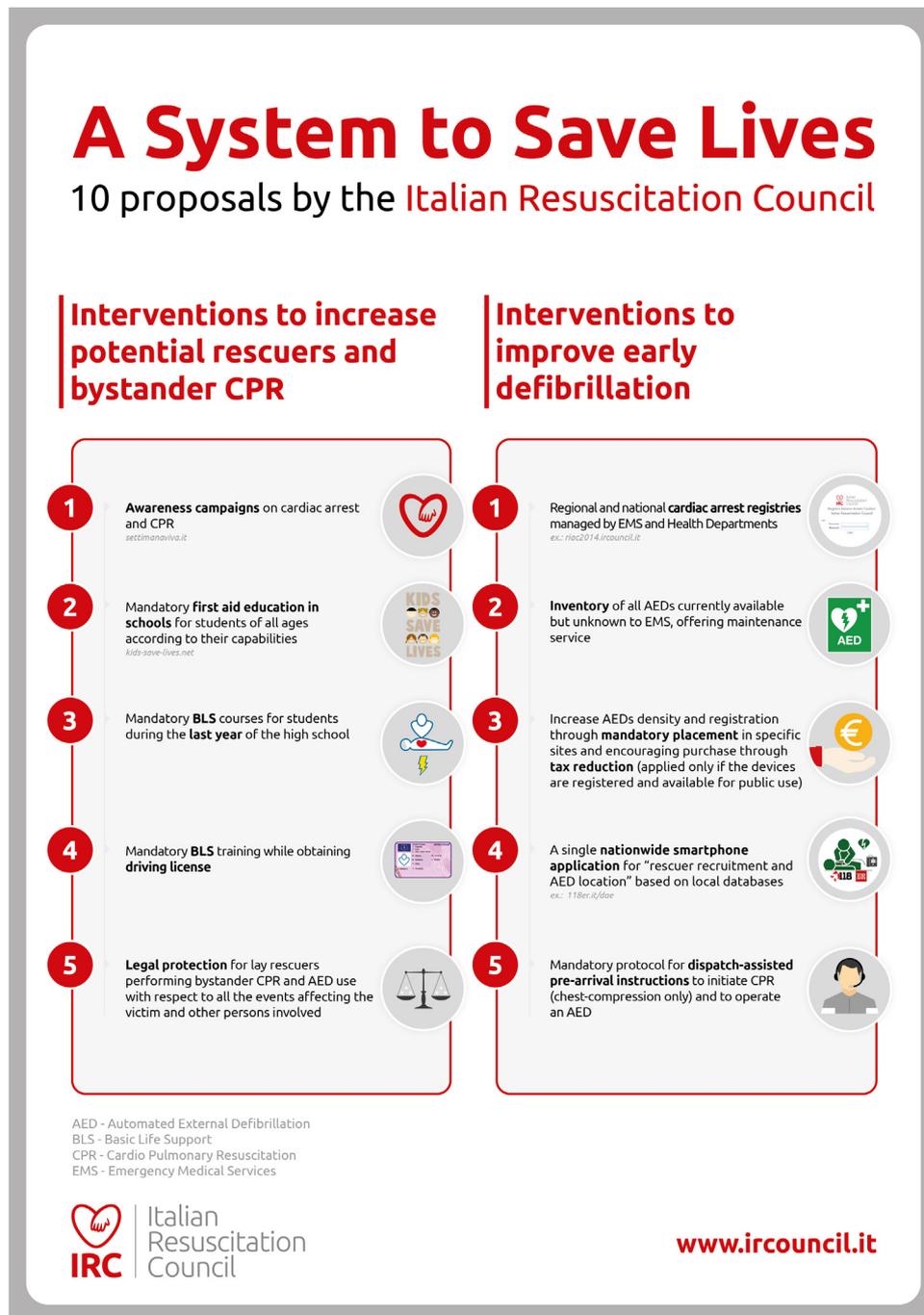
The proposed document included two intervention areas with five steps each.

Interventions to increase **potential rescuers and bystander CPR**:

- 1 Awareness campaigns on cardiac arrest and CPR.
- 2 Mandatory first aid education in schools for students of all ages according to their capabilities.
- 3 Mandatory BLS courses for students during the last year of the high school.
- 4 Mandatory BLS training while obtaining driving license.
- 5 Legal protection for lay rescuers performing bystander CPR and AED use with respect to all the events affecting the victim and other persons involved.

Interventions to improve **early defibrillation**:

- 1 Regional and national cardiac arrest registries managed by EMS and Health Departments.
- 2 Inventory of all AEDs currently available but unknown to EMS, offering maintenance service.
- 3 Increase AEDs density and registration through mandatory placement in specific sites and encouraging purchase through tax reduction (applied only if the devices are registered and available for public use).
- 4 A single nationwide smartphone application for “rescuer recruitment and AED location” based on local databases.
- 5 Mandatory protocol for dispatch-assisted pre-arrival instructions to initiate CPR (chest-compression only) and to operate an AED.



**Fig. 1 – A system to save lives 10 proposals by the Italian Resuscitation Council statement.**

Politicians and public managers need support to improve CA community response. We encourage European Institutions and National Councils to share and establish similar local statements to increase survival after cardiac arrest. Support #SystemsSavingLives campaign.

### Conflict of interest

Andrea Scapigliati is the President of Italian Resuscitation Council. Giuseppe Ristagno is ILCOR leader domain. Niccolò Brenno Grieco, Adriana Boccuzzi, Silvia Scelsi, Samantha Di Marco, Brigida

Panzarino, Serena Copetti and Miriam Tumolo are members of Italian Resuscitation Council Executive Committee. Federico Semeraro is the Past President of Italian Resuscitation Council, BLS SEC co-chair European Resuscitation Council and member of ILCOR Digital Communication Working Group.

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Andrea Scapigliati  
*Fondazione Policlinico Universitario A. Gemelli, IRCCS, Institute of Anaesthesia and Intensive Care, Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Rome, Italy*

Giuseppe Ristagno<sup>a,b</sup>  
<sup>a</sup>*Department of Pathophysiology and Transplantation, University of Milan, Milan, Italy*

<sup>b</sup>*Department of Anesthesiology, Intensive Care and Emergency, Fondazione IRCCS Ca' Granda Ospedale Maggiore Policlinico, Milan, Italy*

Niccolò Brenno Grieco  
*First Cardiology Department– Cath Lab and Intensive Cardiac Care, Niguarda Hospital, Milan, Italy*

Adriana Boccuzzi  
*Clinical Director, Emergency Medicine, A.O.U. San Luigi Gonzaga, Orbassano, Italy*

Silvia Scelsi  
*Department of Health Professions, Pediatric Research Institute “G. Gaslini”, Genova, Italy*

Samantha Di Marco  
*Nursing Emergency Area Department, Presidio Ospedaliero del Levante Ligure, La Spezia, Italy*

Brigida Panzarino  
*Accident and Emergency, Ospedale Santa Maria degli Angeli, Putignano, Italy*

Serena Copetti  
*Pediatric Intensive Care, Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Roma, Italy*

Miriam Tumolo  
*Department of Anaesthesia and Acute and Procedural Pain Giannina Gaslini Children's Hospital, Genoa, Italy*

Federico Semeraro\*  
*Department of Anaesthesia, Intensive Care and EMS, Ospedale Maggiore, Bologna, Italy*

\* Corresponding author.  
 E-mail address: [fsemeraro2008@gmail.com](mailto:fsemeraro2008@gmail.com) (F. Semeraro).

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