The Christophorus-Haus in Frankfurt was opened as a model project in 1988. This new facility offers additional medical and psychological assistance, care and support to chronically ill persons, in particular cancer patients. Every year more than 200,000 persons are affected by cancer, and roughly the same number die of this disease in the Federal Republic of Germany. About two thirds of the patients suffer from chronic pain once the illness has reached an advanced stage. The Christophorus-Haus focuses most of its attention on these persons.

The aim of the Christophorus-Haus is to comfort, strengthen and lend support to chronically ill people. As the Munich psychotherapist Almuth Sellschop put it, “The aim is not only to help people survive but above all to help them remain active in life”.

The philosophy of the Christophorus-Haus focuses on outpatient treatment and support of the patients by our team and on nursing and care at home as well as on pain control, psychotherapy and social guidance. Other major tasks of the Christophorus-Haus are to accompany the patient on his way to death and assist the family during the period of mourning.

The idea of this institution was developed by Ingeborg and Jörg Harmsen with reference to the experience gained by English and American hospices, and put into practice with the collaboration of the Schmerztherapeutischen Kolloquium e.V., a registered association in Frankfurt with a membership of about 1500 doctors and psychologists. The work is carried out only on an outpatient basis with a small day-clinic. For medical and organisational reasons it will be necessary to add a small inpatient ward.

The medical and psychological programme is based on a holistic, psychosomatic view of disease which pays particular attention to the patient’s social context. The programme concentrates on the patient himself and his quality of life. In addition to medical treatment by family doctors and oncologists, the Christophorus-Haus offers complementary medical and psychological assistance and care: medical guidance, pain control, psychological advice and therapy, home nursing, and social and pastoral support.
The objective of the Christophorus-Haus is to give all cancer patients and their families every possible kind of support, to build up hope, to help those suffering from cancer, and to strengthen their self-respect and confidence in their ability to help themselves. With doctors, nurses, psychologists, social and pastoral workers functioning as a team, the aim is to open up to patients the possibility of

- Being rehabilitated
- Speaking about their disease and related anxieties
- Living free of symptoms, especially free of pain
- Pursuing personal activities more
- Being nursed at home
- Being looked after at home when dying

The first phase (day clinic) of the Christophorus-Haus programme comprises four main activities:

1. Medical pain therapy, complementary medical guidance and support
2. Psychological pain therapy, psychological guidance, help in coping with stress and fear
3. Guidance on general daily living, nutrition, health training, family involvement
4. Day clinic and home nursing

A telephone information service is also available, and training seminars, advanced training and Balint groups are held for patients, family members, any interested persons and the staff of the Christophorus-Haus. Our medico-psychological, socio-ecological cancer help programme is regarded as complementary to, not as competition to, traditional medical treatment being given at the same time.

Pain therapy does not simply mean giving analgesics but has many other aspects. Drugs that are administered have to be taken regularly and in sufficient quantity, under constant medical supervision. As a rule, oral administration is better for cancer patients than injections. There are other methods of pain therapy, such as local anaesthesia, acupuncture, transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation, hypnosis, psychotherapeutic methods to ease pain (“fakir” techniques), etc.

Nutrition plays a major role for patients with pain. Our nutritional programme is based on vegetarian wholemeal food on the model of the Bristol diet, i.e. apart from a sufficiency of vitamins, minerals and trace elements, the essential aspect of this diet is that the organism is supplied with as many vital substances from untreated, natural foodstuffs as possible, in order to activate and strengthen the defence mechanisms of the body.

Psychological methods, such as the Bochum health training described by Simonton (1978), are directed to exercising a positive outlook on life and developing a positive imagination, which will promote health and alleviate