

MYELOMA EURONET POSITION STATEMENT: ACCESS TO THALIDOMIDE AND LENALIDOMIDE

It is known since 1961 that the drug thalidomide is associated with teratogenic risk, i.e. treatment with thalidomide can cause severe birth defects in children. We at Myeloma Euronet acknowledge that disabilities caused by thalidomide have brought a lot of suffering for many people.

Yet, thalidomide today is an important treatment option for many patients suffering from multiple myeloma, an increasingly common, yet still incurable form of bone marrow cancer. Thalidomide is currently used to treat newly diagnosed myeloma patients, patients in relapse or with primarily refractory disease, but also patients who have undergone successful initial therapy as maintenance treatment.

We therefore appreciate that many thalidomide victims' organisations have come to accept that thalidomide—if administered correctly—can help many people who suffer from a number of illnesses. We therefore strongly believe that every myeloma patient in Europe should have access to thalidomide as an important treatment option.

Lenalidomide, a newly developed drug derived from thalidomide, has been approved in the USA since June 2006 for a combination therapy with Dexamethasone in patients with multiple myeloma who already received a standard therapy. At present it is not known when lenalidomide will be approved for the treatment of multiple myeloma in Europe.

Studies suggest that lenalidomide has fewer side effects than thalidomide. However, treatment with lenalidomide may be associated with teratogenic risk. Myeloma Euronet therefore agrees that strict conditions are needed under which this new drug is administered to myeloma patients.

These conditions should be developed in close co-operation between the European Medicines Agency, medical experts, and representatives from patient groups and thalidomide victims' organisations, always keeping in mind that no patient suffering from multiple myeloma must be denied the fastest-possible access to new treatment options that can help in the fight against this dreadful disease.

For further information, please contact representatives of Myeloma Euronet member groups. Please visit www.myeloma-euronet.org for member contact details.

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Myeloma
Euronet
Association
Internationale
sans but
lucratif
883.729.287

Myeloma Euronet
Secretariat:
Robert Schaefer
Brunnenstrasse
178/179
D-10119 Berlin
Germany
Tel.:
+49(0)3028879755
Fax:
+49(0)3028879766
info@myeloma-euronet.org

International Bank
Account Number
DE74 3705 0198
1937 0135 20
SWIFT-BIC:
COLSDE33