

## PRESS RELEASE

### **Detecting myeloma: Increased doctor awareness could shorten unnecessary and painful patient odyssey**

**Barcelona, 12 June 2010** –Patients suffering from multiple myeloma, a bone marrow cancer affecting more than 80,000 people in Europe, have to wait more than six months on average before their disease is detected, about one in four has to see at least four doctors, and more than one in three has to be treated for pain before myeloma diagnosis. These are findings from a recent international survey of 296 general practitioners/family doctors and orthopaedic surgeons/ traumatologists and 349 myeloma patients and patient relatives, conducted by Myeloma Euronet, the European Network of Myeloma Patient Groups<sup>1</sup>.

The survey confirmed that myeloma can have various non-specific symptoms, including back pain, tiredness/weakness, bone pain, recurrent infections, shortness of breath, and bone fractures. Patients therefore present to a range of medical professionals: Before their myeloma is detected, almost two-thirds of patients see a general practitioner/family doctor and about 6 percent an orthopaedic surgeon. From there, however, less than 50 percent of patients are referred to a haematologist, the specialist for detecting myeloma.

Knowing that a prolonged delay in myeloma diagnosis has a significant impact on disease-free survival<sup>2</sup>, it is important to detect the myeloma as early as possible. Even though about 90 percent of the doctors surveyed would be prepared to check for myeloma before considering symptomatic treatment, the majority is not familiar with this disease and rarely detects myeloma or refers patients to a myeloma specialist. As a result, almost 50 percent of patients receive treatment before their myeloma is detected, mainly pain treatment, physiotherapy/ chiropractor/ osteopath treatment and orthopaedic interventions, which sometimes makes matters worse.

“The results are alarming,” says Anita Waldmann, President of Myeloma Euronet, “but the survey also shows that doctors and patients fully agree about what should be done to avoid delays in myeloma diagnosis: Better information for, and better education of, medical professionals, with a special focus on general practitioners and family doctors.”

Myeloma Euronet, a Belgian-registered international non-profit organisation of more than 40 multiple myeloma patient groups and representatives in 20 European countries, is dedicated to raising the awareness of multiple myeloma, an increasingly common form of bone marrow cancer. Myeloma Euronet provides

information on the diagnosis, treatment and care of persons living with multiple myeloma and supports its member organisations in the fulfilment of their missions. Myeloma Euronet also advocates, both independently and in collaboration with organisations with similar objectives, on behalf of those affected by multiple myeloma. The survey was made possible through an unrestricted grant from Celgene International.

Further information:

Myeloma Euronet AISBL

Anita Waldmann, President

Tel.: +49 6142 32123

info@myeloma-euronet.org

References:

- <sup>1</sup> The full survey report is available for download at <http://myeloma-euronet.org/en/survey/index.php>
- <sup>2</sup> Kariyawasan CC, Hughes DA, Jayatillake MM, Mehta AB: Multiple myeloma: causes and consequences of delay in diagnosis. QJM. 2007 Oct; 100(10):635-40. Epub 2007 Sep 10.

**MYELOMA EURONET – The voice of myeloma patients in Europe**