

PRESS RELEASE

Bone pain can be a sign of myeloma – Patients and doctors join forces to raise awareness of early myeloma diagnosis

Berlin, 20 May 2008 – Myeloma Euronet, the European Network of Myeloma Patient Groups, and EFORT, the European Federation of National Associations of Orthopaedics and Traumatology, have joined efforts to highlight the importance of early myeloma diagnosis.

A recent international survey¹ conducted by Myeloma Euronet among patients and physicians has revealed that advanced disease stage due to late diagnosis constitutes one of the greatest barriers to myeloma treatment and care. A study published last year in the Quarterly Journal of Medicine has confirmed that a prolonged delay in the diagnosis of myeloma does have a significant impact on disease-free survival.²

Bone pain is one of the most frequent symptoms of multiple myeloma, an increasingly common form of bone marrow cancer that is incurable but treatable. Myeloma affects around 80,000 people in Europe at any one time. "It can happen that myeloma patients go undiagnosed for years and sometimes they receive treatment for their bone pain that actually makes matters worse. This is why it is so important to check for myeloma whenever there is bone pain," says Anita Waldmann, President of Myeloma Euronet.

"This is an unprecedented partnership of cancer patients and orthopaedic surgeons and traumatologists across Europe and we are very excited that EFORT has agreed to inform its members of the need to routinely check for myeloma when seeing patients who report pain in the bone or in the back," Ms. Waldmann concludes.

Prof. Karl-Göran Thorngren, President of EFORT, agrees and adds: "We know that back pain can be a symptom of various cancer types, including pancreatic cancer, colon cancer and multiple myeloma, and we realise that a diagnosis as early as possible is extremely important. This issue has to be addressed across medical disciplines and we are more than happy to take steps in that direction, for example, by means of our Newsletter going out to more than 30,000 orthopaedic surgeons and traumatologists across Europe."

Myeloma Euronet and EFORT have also jointly issued a poster entitled "Back Pain – Could be Myeloma!" that can be downloaded from the Myeloma Euronet Web site at www.myeloma-euronet.org, and EFORT has granted Myeloma Euronet a free booth space at the upcoming 9th EFORT congress where the patient network can inform the participants about this issue. The congress will be held from 29 May - 1 June in Nice, France, and the President of Myeloma Euronet will also be available for interviews at the congress press conference to be held on 30th May at 9:30 a.m. in the Acropolis Convention Centre.

Myeloma can have various other non-specific symptoms, including but not limited to, anaemia and renal failure, and patients therefore present to a range of medical professionals, such as general practitioners or nephrologists. For this reason, the European section of the World Organization of National Colleges, Academies and Academic Associations of General Practitioners/Family Physicians (WONCA), have invited Myeloma Euronet to their European congress in September this year, to raise awareness of the importance of an early myeloma diagnosis, and Myeloma Euronet will also approach the European Renal Association.

Myeloma Euronet is a Belgian-registered international non-profit organisation of multiple myeloma patient groups in 18 European countries dedicated to raising the awareness of multiple myeloma. Myeloma Euronet also provides information on myeloma diagnosis, treatment and care and advocates the cause of myeloma at the European level.

EFORT works on behalf of the European Orthopaedic and Traumatology community, to secure mobility, musculoskeletal health and quality of life. EFORT unites European national orthopaedics societies from 36 European countries with about 35,000 members.

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References:

- ¹ A full survey report is available for download at www.myeloma-euronet.org
- ² 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