

P R E S S R E L E A S E

International experts call for mechanism-orientated treatment approach for severe chronic pain

Aachen, 18 January 2010. Currently, chronic pain treatment is driven mainly by pain intensity and not by the underlying mechanisms. In consequence, pharmacological treatment does not always result in sufficient analgesia, as the international advisory board of CHANGE PAIN – an initiative by the German pain expert Grunenthal and strongly endorsed by the European Federation of IASP® Chapters (EFIC®) – observed. During their second meeting in Zurich in November 2009, the pain experts called for a change towards a more mechanism-orientated treatment approach. To provide guidance for healthcare professionals, the international expert group discussed a unique online education programme that aims to move treatment from symptom-control towards mechanism-orientated management of severe chronic pain. In addition, the experts requested further research about patients’ needs and proposed that a new tool be implemented to improve the communication between patients and healthcare professionals.

"20 years ago the main criterion for choosing a drug was level of pain intensity. Since then, we have increased our knowledge of pain immensely and now strive for a mechanism-orientated approach", said Dr Gerhard H. H. Mueller-Schwefe, MD, President of the German Pain Association (DGS) and Chairman of the international CHANGE PAIN Advisory Board.

In many cases it is a challenge to identify which underlying mechanisms are involved if patients suffer from chronic pain – in particular in pain conditions with a nociceptive and neuropathic component. But to apply methods based on mechanism and evidence is a way to improve current pain treatment that holds high potential: as nociceptive and neuropathic pain is processed differently, it typically responds to different drugs. Therefore, if the cause of pain is identified correctly, treatment is more likely to result in effective pain relief as the respective therapy can be chosen accordingly. This in turn leads to increased quality of life for the patients.

"To enhance healthcare professionals’ knowledge about the different pain mechanisms and to raise awareness of the adequate use of analgesics, a new approach to education is needed", Professor Giustino Varrassi, MD, EFIC President and Chairman of CHANGE PAIN explained. "This is why early 2010 we are launching the PAIN Education programme, which will be accessible online and will offer individualised learning for healthcare professionals".

Another aspect that was recognised as being crucial for optimising pain therapy was the communication between healthcare professionals and patients. “A common understanding of pain severity and the respective individual treatment goals needs to be achieved”, said Dr Gerhard H. H. Mueller-Schwefe, MD: “So far there is often a discrepancy between healthcare professionals’ and patients’ assessment of pain which is likely to result in under-treatment.” Reduced quality of life and an increased burden for healthcare systems are further consequences.

To support healthcare professionals in their communication with patients, the advisory board experts are currently working on a new tool that will facilitate the process of measuring and discussing not only the severity of the pain but also the individual treatment goals of each patient. In addition, the experts agreed that further research was needed to improve the understanding of patients’ expectations and needs and a pan-European Union patient survey was endorsed, which will start in 2010.

About CHANGE PAIN

CHANGE PAIN aims to improve the management of severe chronic pain and is strongly endorsed by the European Federation of the IASP® Chapters (EFIC®). Initiated by the German pain expert Grunenthal, the initiative involves pain experts from across Europe. The international Advisory Board is chaired by Professor Giustino Varrassi, MD, President of the EFIC, and Dr Gerhard H. H. Mueller-Schwefe, MD, President of the German Pain Association (DGS). Key objectives of CHANGE PAIN are to generate a better understanding of the unmet medical needs in severe chronic pain management, improve medical education and encourage communication between healthcare professionals and patients. More information: www.change-pain.com

About Grunenthal

Grunenthal is passionate about globally being the preferred partner in pain management for patients, health care professionals and payors. The corporation drives innovation to expand European market leadership in moderate to severe pain. Grunenthal is an independent, family-owned German corporation with companies in 34 countries all over the world. Founded in 1946, the corporation employs 2,000 people in Germany and 5,200 worldwide. In 2008, Grunenthal achieved revenues of about 864 million Euros. More information:

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