

## PRESS RELEASE

# Developing solutions for an improved management of chronic pain

## Conclusions from the CHANGE PAIN® Advisory Board

Aachen, 20 May 2010. Although chronic pain affects around 20% of adults in Europe and the USA, there is substantial evidence that this debilitating condition is often inadequately treated. A group of international pain experts has now published a first commentary calling for a CHANGE in the pharmacological management of severe chronic pain. The publication represents a consensus reached by the international Advisory Board of CHANGE PAIN® – an initiative by German pain expert Grünenthal, which is endorsed by the European Federation of IASP® Chapters (EFIC®). To improve patient outcomes, a thorough understanding of underlying pain mechanisms and a multi-mechanistic treatment approach is required. The experts call for user-friendly educational tools for physicians and for a better communication between physicians and pain patients in order to agree on individual treatment objectives.

"A change in severe chronic pain management is clearly needed," explains Professor Giustino Varrassi, President of EFIC and one of two chairmen of the CHANGE PAIN initiative. "The unmet needs of patients with severe chronic pain are evident; the prevalence and duration of suffering are too high and too few patients are satisfactorily treated."

According to the group's findings, guideline recommendations are not universally accepted by those involved in pain management, and pain treatment often seems to be driven mainly by traditional practice and experience. Therefore a greater agreement about the best treatment strategy for chronic pain is needed and should be applied more consistently, while focusing on the individual patient. Specifically, the experts call for a change in the following aspects of current practice:

- > Assessment of pain and its impact (e.g. through better communication)
- Education of healthcare professionals regarding pain management
- Comprehension of underlying mechanisms in chronic pain and the relevant pharmacological principles

The experts pointed out that pain with a neuropathic component is often more severe and more difficult to treat. A condition which often manifests both nociceptive and neuropathic components is chronic low back pain. It is estimated that there is a neuropathic component in up to two thirds of back pain patients. Pain control in







these patients is often insufficient, due to the limited awareness of the physiological difference between neuropathic and nociceptive pain and the respective pharmacological options.

The publication also highlights the fact that pharmacological treatment of severe chronic pain is often inefficient because patients struggle to maintain the balance between adequate pain relief and their ability to tolerate prescribed medication. This often results in a Vicious Circle of insufficient analgesia and debilitating side effects that lead patients to discontinue treatment. The experts agree that increasing awareness of the Vicious Circle among the medical community can promote adherence to treatment regimens.

Educational modules addressing theses issues are currently under development. First draft versions were discussed at the third CHANGE PAIN<sup>®</sup> Advisory Board meeting, which was held on March 27-28 2010. In addition, the group is proposing a new pain scale that combines pain rating assessment with individually set treatment goals, and which does not focus on pain intensity as an outcome parameter alone but takes into account the situation of patients in a more holistic way. These tools and highlights from meetings of the CHANGE PAIN<sup>®</sup> group will be presented to more than 200 pain specialists from across Europe at an Expert Summit in Rome in June 2010. Further research supported by the CHANGE PAIN<sup>®</sup> group to generate more insights on unmet medical needs and best practice in the management of chronic pain is still underway and findings will be communicated in future scientific publications and at congresses.

## **About CHANGE PAIN®**

CHANGE PAIN<sup>®</sup> aims to enhance the understanding of the needs of patients with severe chronic pain and to develop solutions to improve pain management. Initiated by German pain expert Grünenthal and endorsed by the European Federation of the IASP<sup>®</sup> Chapters (EFIC<sup>®</sup>), 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. Müller-Schwefe, MD, President of the German Pain Association (DGS). Key objectives of CHANGE PAIN<sup>®</sup> are to generate a better understanding of physicians' and patients' perspectives, publish the results of research projects and communicate findings in scientific publications, as well as to increase knowledge of pain physiology to facilitate individual treatment decisions. More information: www.change-pain.com

## **About EFIC**

The European Federation of IASP chapters (EFIC) is a multidisciplinary professional organisation in the field of pain science and medicine, made up of the most important European scientific societies for the study of pain.







Established in 1993, by Prof. Ulf Lindblom, EFIC represents 31 countries and close to 20.000 scientists, physicians, nurses, physiotherapists, psychologists and other healthcare professionals across Europe, who study pain and treat patients in pain.

## **About Grünenthal**

Grünenthal 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. Grünenthal 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, Grünenthal achieved revenues of about 864 million Euros. More information: www.grunenthal.com

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Varrassi G et al. Commentary. Pharmacological treatment of chronic pain – the need for CHANGE. *Current Medical Research & Opinion*. Posted online on 25 March 2010