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Pfizer Inc.

Europeans Face a Painful Truth on First Ever Neuropathic Pain Day - October 13

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- New Survey Reveals Widespread Ignorance of Debilitating Pain Condition Affecting Millions of Europeans

Alarming, nearly sixty per cent of Europeans have never heard of neuropathic pain (NeP), (1) a debilitating nerve condition that affects approximately 22 million people, (2),(3) according to new surveys carried out amongst the general public and patients across Europe. NeP can often be a complication of diabetes, shingles, HIV and cancer causing such unbearable pain that individuals are often left unable to walk or even wear clothes.

In the survey, commissioned by Pfizer and the Neuropathic Pain Network (NPN), nearly two thirds (58%) had not heard of NeP(1) and of those who had heard of it, over a third (34%) did not understand what it is.(1) More respondents said they would usually buy over-the-counter painkillers in response to any pain than seek diagnosis from a clinician,(1) which is worrying given that NeP is common, under-treated and under-diagnosed.(4)

"These findings emphasize the vast lack of knowledge about neuropathic pain and the importance of educating people about the associated signs and symptoms and how to seek medical advice," comments Penney Cowan, Vice President of the Neuropathic Pain Network. "The reality is that there are millions of people with nerve pain in Europe undiagnosed and not receiving the optimal standard of care. Launching NeP Day, a culmination of the 'Can You Feel my Pain?' campaign, is one important step on the road to achieving awareness and understanding of the condition."

The patient survey specifically sheds further light on the lack of awareness and diagnosis, demonstrating that the majority of patients with NeP (72%) had not heard of it before they were diagnosed,(5) and some can often wait up to 2 years to receive the diagnosis.(5) Approximately 50% of people with NeP felt their pain equated to 'burning oneself',(5) which is thought to be the most painful experience by those who don't suffer from the condition.(1)

"It's heartbreaking that the majority of patients in this survey reported that they 'never feel like a real person'," (5) commented Harry Kletzko, President of the Neuropathic Pain Network, "This is truly upsetting at a time when many treatment options exist, together with strong support networks to help patients live better lives."

Neuropathic Pain: A Debilitating Condition

NeP can have a significant impact on patients' lives leaving many unable to work, walk or even wear clothes as the contact with their skin can cause an unbearable burning pain. However, it is a condition that is often under-diagnosed and under-treated.(4) NeP is initiated or caused by a lesion or dysfunction of the central nervous system (either peripheral or central). Many patients experience NeP as a complication from diabetes, shingles, HIV, cancer, multiple sclerosis, stroke or spinal cord injury. To non-sufferers lying on a bed of nails sounds painful, but some people with NeP feel like they are doing this everyday, very often describing the pain as feeling like 'burning', 'shooting', 'stabbing' or 'electric shock-like' sensations. In recent years a number of screening tools have been developed to help physicians identify this difficult to diagnose condition.

The 'Can You Feel My Pain' European Awareness Campaign

The survey was conducted by Pfizer in collaboration with the Neuropathic Pain Network to identify gaps in the knowledge around the disease between sufferers and general public across Europe. The results have since been used to raise awareness of neuropathic pain amongst consumers at the launch of the 'Can You Feel My Pain' European campaign events in Scotland (August 19), The Netherlands (September 28), Sweden (October 3) and Germany (October 10). The campaign saw a team of renowned 3D street artists create images on cities streets, to depict the experiences of a person with neuropathic pain. The campaign culminates today on October 13 which sees the launch of the first Neuropathic Pain Day across Europe.

About the Survey

In July 2008, Neuropathic Pain Network and Pfizer commissioned GfK to conduct a multi-

country survey of people with NeP and the general public. A survey of 824 individuals and 150 patients was conducted in four European countries including: the United Kingdom, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden. Fieldwork was conducted from July 2008 through to September 2008.

About the Neuropathic Pain Network

The Neuropathic Pain Network (NPN) is a coalition of organisations that actively support people with neuropathic pain by enabling them to cope better with their pain, to obtain the best treatment and, ultimately, to improve the quality of their lives. The NPN has developed the first website solely dedicated to providing support for people with neuropathic pain.

About Pfizer

Pfizer Inc, the world's largest research-based pharmaceutical company, discovers, develops, manufactures and markets prescription medicines in 11 therapeutic areas including oncology, cardiovascular, pain, neuroscience and infectious diseases, including HIV/AIDS.

References

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<http://www.neuropathicpainnetwork.org>

Contact:

For more information, please contact: Penney Cowan, President, Neuropathic Pain Network, Direct Tel: +1-916-632-0922, pcowan@pacbell.net; Claire Leggott, Resolute Communications, Direct Tel: +44(0)207-397-7075 , claire.leggott@resolutecommunications.co.uk

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