



## Tackling Cancer in the EU: Why is Innovation Necessary?

**2 October 2008 – European Health Forum Gastein, Austria.** Leading experts from patient organisations, the professional community, the pharmaceutical industry and key members of the European Parliament have called upon the EU to recognise the **importance of innovation in the fight against cancer**. At a workshop sponsored by Novartis entitled “*Tackling Cancer: The Role of Innovation*,” an expert panel examined the challenges to supplying innovation, how this area needs support and prioritisation from all key stakeholders within the EU and the impact that innovation can have on dramatically improving the everyday life for cancer patients.

The panel of experts consisted of senior MEPs Georgs Andrejevs and Alojz Peterle, Richard Sullivan of the European Cancer Research Managers Foundation, Julio Celis from the European CanCer Organisation ECCO, Roger Wilson of Sarcoma UK and Guido Guidi of Novartis Oncology. Engaging in the debate, the workshop audience discussed how innovation can be encouraged and developed in the EU.

“Cancer research and innovation are fundamental elements in the fight against the burden of this disease and the improvement of life for millions of patients in Europe. Europeans have witnessed substantial progress in the fight against cancer in the past 20 years through the development of new and innovative therapies. As a result, patients with cancer that would have killed them in a very short period of time are now able to have a substantially improved quality of life and their life expectancy extended, and in some cases these diseases have even become curable.” said **Dr. Guido Guidi, Head of Region Europe, Novartis Oncology** speaking at the event.

“This is why the EU needs to take a leading role in creating incentives for innovation, stopping the brain drain to the US and ensuring that we continue to develop treatments which will save the life of millions of people. To put it simply: we must continue to innovate so we can help patients escape their death sentence!” he continued.

Indeed, the participants recognised that despite great progress cancer remains the second largest killer in Europe, and what is particularly worrying is that Europeans do not have the same chance of surviving across member states: inequalities in the EU result in great differences in outcomes concerning survival rates — for example, the five-year survival of all cancer patients varies from 25 to 50 per cent.

In this respect, many of the participants agreed that the EU has a key responsibility in ensuring that the positive effects of innovation are accessible across all member states and that the aim of EU action is to encourage the development of informational exchange, improve best practice sharing and ultimately ensure that standards of research, prevention, care and treatment are raised across the whole of the EU.”

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