

PRESS RELEASE

Chronic Pain as Disease – Politics or Science?

International multi-stakeholder platform to discuss the position of chronic pain amongst chronic diseases 3rd European symposium on the “Societal Impact of Pain” (SIP) taking place during Danish EU Presidency in Copenhagen

Brussels, 21 March, 2012. The 3rd European symposium on the “Societal Impact of Pain” (SIP 2012) will take place in Copenhagen, Denmark on 29-31 May. On the occasion of the Danish EU Presidency, more than 300 stakeholders from across Europe will come together to continue raising awareness on the societal impact of pain, exchanging national best practices of pain care policy projects and fostering the EU-wide implementation of the “Road Map for Action”, the action plan and key result from the 2nd SIP symposium, which took place in the EU Parliament in Brussels in 2011.

An important outcome of [SIP 2011](#) in the European Parliament was the “[Road Map for Action](#)”, which outlines seven key policy dimensions on how the EU institutions and member states could effectively address the societal impact of pain at both EU and national levels. The national and supranational implementation of the SIP Road Map for Action will be a central theme for discussion at [SIP 2012](#).

In particular, policy dimension No. 1 of the Road Map on “*Acknowledg[ing] that pain is an important factor limiting the quality of life and should be a top priority of the national health care system*” will be one major focus of SIP 2012, as Professor Hans G. Kress, MD, PhD, President of EFIC[®], explains:

“While acute pain, such as that following an injury or surgery, is a direct outcome of the noxious event and thus a useful signal to the individual of the imminent danger, chronic pain usually persists for a longer period of time, when the usefulness of the alarming symptom has long passed. Moreover, chronic pain induces a complex set of physical, psychological, but also social changes to the individual patient and his or her social environment, respectively. Chronic pain thus imposes a huge substantial burden, both on the individual but also on society at large including enormous economic costs for health care systems. With the SIP platform we are trying to increase awareness of these consequences and to support and foster policy-making on EU and Member State level to improve pain perception and management for patients in Europe.”

It may appear that the SIP platform and its endorsers still have a long way ahead of them: The general (public) perception of chronic pain may be distinct from the one suggested by EFIC[®] and



The SIP 2012 symposium is hosted by the Danish Association for Chronic Pain Patients (FAKS). The scientific framework of SIP 2012 is under the responsibility of the European Federation of IASP[®] Chapters (EFIC[®]). The pharmaceutical company Grünenthal GmbH is responsible for funding and non-financial support (e.g. logistical support). The scientific aims of the SIP 2012 symposium have been endorsed by a large number of pain advocacy and scientific organisations.

not fully be seen as a disease in its own right, as exemplarily illustrates Lorimer Moseley, Professor Clinical Neurosciences at the University of South Australia, Adelaide & Neuroscience Research Australia in Sydney:

“By propagating that pain is an entity in itself – a disease in its own right – I believe we are not helping to reconceptualise the complex nature of ‘pain’, which is truly a multifactorial, conscious experience and of bio-psycho-social nature for the patient”, Moseley opposes. “I can definitely see the reasoning behind promoting this idea of chronic pain being a disease – clearly the biological processes that seem to drive chronic pain are not truly damaging in the peripheral body-part kind of way, so classifying them according to the tissue involved is erroneous. However, I believe we run the risk of simply shifting the apparent problem one or two rungs up the sensory processing ladder – these problems are not, in my view, pain, but contributors to pain. This would seem a critical and complex debate and one I am most enthusiastic about participating in: The workshop during the SIP 2012 in Copenhagen therefore represents a critical opportunity to discuss this matter with peers and other key stakeholders – it is a critical issue for politicians, patients, scientists and clinicians.”

Representing the patients’ voice and aiming for particular awareness for the topic of chronic pain among the Danish presidency of the EU council, Pia Frederiksen, President of the Danish Association for Chronic Pain Patients (FAKS), details on her expectation for SIP 2012:

“Among our vision for pain patients in Denmark we look for achieving recognition of chronic pain as a serious and debilitating condition and to disseminate knowledge on pain management and hence support individual patients and their families to better cope with their situation. As president of FAKS, I truly hope that the discussions during SIP 2012 will substantially contribute to raise awareness on chronic pain not only in Denmark, but also in other EU Member States. Together with other international patient advocacy groups, FAKS will continue to challenge politicians and budget holders to revise their perception of chronic pain and to acknowledge it as separate health state amongst other chronic diseases, which tremendously impacts patients’ quality of life as well as budgets of health care systems.”

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More information on SIP available at www.sip-platform.eu

Registration for SIP 2012 at: <http://www.regonline.com/sip-copenhagen>

-ENDS-

Notes to Editors:

About FAKS

FAKS - the Danish Association of Chronic Pain Patients was founded in 1990. A group of pain patients, brought together in an interdisciplinary pain unit, came up with the idea. The vision was to bring pain patients together in order to inspire and activate each other in various positive ways. Thus, one of the main objectives was to deal with common problems such as physical, mental, and social inactivity.

In FAKS we come together doing various activities physical as well as mental in order to divert our attention from the pain. We have lectures, photography yoga, and mindfulness courses, excursions to the cinema, theater and amusement parks, just to name a few.

FAKS sets itself aside from other patient groups by being a non-specific- diagnosis-dependent- association. The fact that in many cases pain becomes a disease of its own - no matter the initial cause - calls for a different approach. Even though there exists universal problems to chronic pain patients, people and their pain issues are in many ways as different and unique as themselves. For more information, please visit www.faks.dk

About the Societal Impact of Pain (SIP)

The "Societal Impact of Pain" (SIP) is an international, multi-stakeholder platform created in 2010 and aims to raise awareness of the relevance of the impact that pain has on our societies, health and economic systems, exchanging information and sharing best-practices across all member states of the European Union, and developing and fostering European-wide policy strategies & activities for improved pain management in Europe. The platform provides opportunities for discussion for health care professionals, pain advocacy groups, politicians, insurances, representatives of health authorities, regulators and budget holders.

The scientific framework of the SIP platform is under the responsibility of the European Federation of IASP® Chapters (EFIC®). The pharmaceutical company Grünenthal GmbH is responsible for funding and non-financial support (e.g. logistical support). For more information, please visit www.sip-platform.eu

About EFIC

The European Federation of IASP® Chapters (EFIC®) is a multidisciplinary professional organisation in the field of pain research and medicine, consisting of the 35 so-called chapters of the International Association for the Study of Pain (IASP®), which are the IASP approved official National Pain Societies in each country. EFIC's constituent chapters represent pain societies from 35 European countries and close to 20,000 physicians, basic researchers, nurses, physiotherapists, psychologists and other healthcare professionals across Europe, who are involved in pain management and pain research. For more information, please visit www.efic.org.

About Grünenthal

The Grünenthal Group is an independent, family-owned international research based pharmaceutical company headquartered in Aachen, Germany. Building on its unique position in pain, its objective is to become the most patient-centric company to be a leader in therapy innovation. Grünenthal is one of the last five research-oriented pharmaceutical corporations with headquarters based in Germany which sustainably invests in research and development. These investments amounted to about 25 % of revenues in 2011. Grünenthal's research and development strategy concentrates on select fields of therapy and state-of-the-art technologies. We focus on the intensive search for new ways to treat pain better, more effectively and with fewer side-effects than before. Altogether, the Grünenthal Group has affiliates in 26 countries worldwide. Grünenthal products are sold in more than 155 countries and approx. 4,200 employees are working for the Grünenthal Group worldwide. In 2011, Grünenthal reached estimated revenues of 947 Mio €. More information: www.grunenthal.com.

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