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**Embargo: 00:01 CET, 10<sup>th</sup> September 2009**

**Despite a year of treatment, 95% of patients are suffering constant pain,  
yet 64% believe they are on the most appropriate treatment**  
***New survey shows patients resigning themselves to a life of pain***

**European Federation of Chapters of the International Association for the Study of Pain (EFIC) Congress, Lisbon (10 September 2009):** Although 95% of patients are suffering chronic pain after a year of treatment<sup>1</sup>, 64% believe they are taking the most appropriate medication and over half still believe that everything possible is being done to help them, according to the results of a one-year survey of patients with chronic pain, presented today at the EFIC congress. These results demonstrate that, despite continuing to suffer from chronic pain, a high proportion of patients accept chronic pain as a permanent part of their lives that cannot be challenged.

The new survey, entitled PainSTORY (**Pain Study Tracking Ongoing Responses for a Year**), is the first of its kind to track the impact of ongoing chronic pain on patients' lives over the course of a year, and involved 294 patients in 13 European countries.

The research unveils that one year on, chronic pain controls the life of six in ten patients, with more than half of patients' pain levels failing to improve. For 19% of patients, their pain has become even worse. Patients' everyday life is affected most, with eight in ten respondents reporting that their pain has an impact on their quality of life. Patients highlight ongoing challenges associated with childcare, with 53% reporting difficulties in looking after their children at the end of the research compared to 47% at the beginning. The research also reveals that pain has a significant impact on patients' ability to work: 65% worry that their pain will mean they have to stop work completely.

The emotional impact of pain is just as detrimental as its physical impact. Across the year, 44% of patients report feeling alone in tackling their pain and two thirds of patients feel anxious or depressed as a result of their pain. For 28% of patients, their pain is so bad that they sometimes want to die. Patients report feeling trapped by a pain which may vary in intensity, but continuously affects every aspect of their life.

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<sup>1</sup> Treatment includes prescription medication, over the counter medication and alternative medication

Commenting on the findings of the survey, Hans Kress, President Elect, European Federation of Chapters of the International Association for the Study of Pain said: “This research presents a unique insight into patients’ year-long journey through pain. It is shocking to observe that after 12 months, patients are still trapped in an ongoing cycle of pain and a large proportion seem to be accepting the severe impact their pain has on their lives, and losing hope.”

The survey findings point to a number of reasons for patients’ ongoing suffering. Many patients may not be receiving the appropriate medication to control their pain - despite 95% of patients receiving treatment suffering from moderate to severe chronic pain, only 12% had been prescribed strong opioid medication at the end of the year-long research, with 30% resorting to over the counter (OTC) medication to try to manage their pain either alone or in combination with other therapies.

Patients’ contact with physicians may also be less frequent than is needed. Despite the high proportion of patients continuing to suffer pain, the number of patients visiting a doctor declined over the course of the year from 83% at the beginning of the year to 70% at the end. Of the 68% of patients who consistently consulted a healthcare professional across the year, only 2% had consulted a pain specialist consistently throughout the year.

Experience of treatment side effects can have a major influence on patients’ attitude to pain management. Almost half of all patients taking prescription medication report side effects, the most common of which is constipation<sup>2</sup>, experienced by 45% of patients, 49% of whom are receiving treatment with opioids. Although highly effective in controlling pain, opioids can be associated with opioid-induced constipation (OIC). The research indicates that 26% of patients taking opioid medication turn to laxatives to help relieve their constipation, which may alleviate symptoms of OIC but will not address the cause of the problem.

Commenting on the survey findings, Dr Tony O’Brien, Consultant Physician in Palliative Medicine at Cork University Hospital, said: “It is very distressing to note that such a large proportion of patients continue to experience uncontrolled pain. Sadly, many may suffer in silence. The human cost is immeasurable. These patients must have ready access to skilled healthcare professionals and be fully evaluated and assessed. In selected patients, a supervised trial of opioid medication will be necessary in order to achieve an optimal level of pain control. In this regard, care must be taken to prevent predictable opioid side effects, including constipation. Effective treatments are available and patients are encouraged to seek medical opinion at the earliest opportunity.”

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<sup>2</sup> The term ‘constipation’ incorporated bloating, stomach ache and stomach cramps

## Note to editors

### **About the survey**

PainSTORY (Pain Study Tracking Ongoing Responses for a Year) is the first study of its kind to track patients with chronic pain over one year, providing in depth insight into how pain impacts the daily lives of patients and the management of pain in 13 European countries.

The PainSTORY survey was conducted by an independent research company, Ipsos MORI, in collaboration with the following independent third parties:

- European Federation of IASP Chapters
- World Institute of Pain
- OPEN Minds

The survey was sponsored by a restricted educational grant from, and prepared in association with, Mundipharma International Limited.

### **Methodology**

294 patients suffering from non-malignant (osteoarthritis, back pain / lower back pain, osteoporosis, neuropathic pain, mixed pain, other long term pain), chronic pain (i.e. lasting for more than three months) rating  $\geq 5$ -10 on a pain scale at screening stage (where 0 = no pain and 10 = the worst pain imaginable) completed the survey. At the evaluation stage of the survey, patients' pain levels were ranked as mild (1-3), moderate (4-7) or severe (8-10). Respondents were studied for 12 months with the research being carried out in 13 countries across Europe: United Kingdom, France, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Spain, Ireland, Belgium, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Netherlands and Norway by an independent research company, Ipsos MORI.

The study consisted of four waves of qualitative interviews between April 2008 and May 2009. Interim engagement activities such as diaries and 'life books' were sent to patients between the four waves to provide additional insight. Comparisons between baseline data and subsequent wave results showed how the impact of pain and pain management changes over the course of a year.

**Please visit [www.painstory.org](http://www.painstory.org) for further information, or contact:**

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