



PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

The EBMT celebrates 60 years of medical innovations saving the lives of patients with blood cancers and other deadly diseases

Barcelona, 23 February 2017 - During its 43rd Annual Meeting in Marseille, France, from 26th-29th March, the EBMT will hold a series of activities for its 5,000 delegates to celebrate 60 years of medical innovations saving patients' lives.

The EBMT will acknowledge the work that stems from the pioneering observations made by E. Donnall Thomas, also known as the father of bone marrow transplantation and who received the Nobel Prize in Medicine in 1990. For over 60 years Thomas' colleagues and fellows, not only in the United States but also in Europe and worldwide, have worked relentlessly in preclinical and clinical research to develop innovative treatments that improve the outcome and quality of life for cancer patients.

The rise of haematopoietic stem cell transplantation

This year marks the 60th anniversary of one of the seminal publications that triggered the introduction of haematopoietic stem cell transplantation (HSCT) in medical practices worldwide. This landmark paper by Thomas et al. entitled, "Intravenous infusion of bone marrow in patients receiving radiation and chemotherapy" was published in the *New England Journal* on the 12th September 1957. The same year, this group also published other landmark papers in *Blood*. From the mid-1950s, Thomas developed methods for providing people with new bone marrow cells through transplants. Using radiation, chemotherapy, and nowadays immunosuppressive drugs, the body's own bone marrow cells are killed and the immune system's rejection mechanism is subdued. Bone marrow cells from a donor are then provided through a blood transfusion.

In 1958, a year after Thomas' paper, Georges Mathé performed the first ever successful allogeneic bone marrow transplant on unrelated human beings. Since then, major developments in the field of HSCT have occurred thanks to the contributions of researchers worldwide. In fact, Nobel Prizes in physiology or medicine have been awarded for research in stem cells and transplantation: Jean Dausset, Baruj Benacerraf and Georges D. Snell in 1980 for the HLA histocompatibility system discovery; Joseph E. Murray and E. Donnall Thomas in 1990 for their discoveries concerning organ and cell transplantation for the treatment of human disease.

The "EBMT's mission is very important and very ambitious," states Mohamad Mohty, President of the EBMT, and Head of the Haematology department at the Saint-Antoine Hospital in Paris. "Our goal is to conquer and cure blood diseases. In 1974, the visionary founders of the EBMT created one of the most successful medical societies in the world, and established a transplant registry that 43 years later includes 500,000 registered patients. The EBMT is in the privileged position of being always in the lead to disseminate knowledge, and advance the field of stem cell transplantation and cellular therapy" concludes Professor Mohty.

From cell transplant to cellular therapies

While research is evolving, all eyes are turned towards novel cellular therapies for potential applications. Christian Chabannon, President of the 43rd EBMT Annual Meeting and Secretary of the Cellular Therapy and Immunobiology Working Party explains: "This denotes significant



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changes in the field, where medical practices evolve from the relatively monotypic approach of haematopoietic cell transplant to the more versatile use of different categories of cellular therapies.” The EBMT’s objective is to understand and exploit the biological, including immunological, events occurring upon HSCT at large, and to implement modern cellular therapies based on cell and gene engineering approaches to improve transplantation outcomes.

At the Opening Session of the 43rd EBMT Annual Meeting, Rainer Storb from the faculty of both, the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center and the University of Washington School of Medicine, will give a keynote lecture entitled, “60 years of HSCT: progress from bone marrow transplantation to the first cellular and gene therapies.”

About the EBMT

The EBMT is a not-for-profit medical and scientific organisation established in 1974. It is dedicated to fighting life-threatening blood cancers and diseases and improving patients’ lives. The EBMT Members—more than 4,000 physicians, nurses, scientists and other healthcare professionals—participate in a unique collaborative network of peers involved in HSCT and cellular therapy research. The membership encompasses more than 600 centres, from over 60 countries, that perform or are involved in HSCT. The EBMT holds a central role in performing co-operative studies and disseminating state-of-the-art knowledge aimed at increasing survival rates and enhancing the quality of life of patients with life-threatening blood cancers and diseases.

For further information about the EBMT, please visit the website: www.ebmt.org and follow us on Twitter: @TheEBMT