

## PRESS RELEASE

### Fostering advances in haematology and bone marrow transplantation EBMT Annual Congress, Paris, 3<sup>rd</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> April 2011.

**Paris, Tuesday April 5, 2011** - *"Few scientific and medical fields have undergone as many dramatic changes and advances in fundamental research and new therapies as haematology over the past fifty years"*, says Professor Norbert-Claude Gorin - EBMT Congress President and Head of the Oncology-Hematology and Nuclear Medicine Department at Saint Antoine Hospital and University "Pierre et Marie Curie" (UPMC) Paris-France. *"This congress is a unique opportunity to take stock on these advances."*

More than 4,000 participants – international experts, scientists, physicians, nurses, statisticians, clinical research technicians, and patients – from more than 73 countries are expected at the 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Congress of **European Group for Blood and Marrow Transplantation (EBMT)** at Palais des Congrès, Paris France. In addition, four more related meetings will take place simultaneously: the 27<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the **EBMT Nurses Group**, the 10<sup>th</sup> Meeting of **EBMT Data Management Group**, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of **EBMT Quality Management**, as well as the 5<sup>th</sup> **EBMT Patient & Family Day**.

The Patient & Family Day will feature numerous lectures and panels, and patients will be given an opportunity to share their experiences and express their point of view on the latest research advances in the field, on clinical and biological aspects of the patient condition, and on psychological and quality of life issues. One highlight of this day will be the lecture given by **Professor Axel Kahn**, physician and geneticist, on **"Genes and Humans"**.

As can be seen, these four days will provide an opportunity for promoting and exchanging the greatest advances in the field of bone marrow transplantation and haematopoietic stem cells as applied to the treatment of cancer and other blood diseases, as well as cell therapy in the vast area of regenerative medicine.

A plenary session will honour the memory of **Professor Georges Mathé**, founder and director of the Cancer and Immunogenetics Institute at Paul Brousse hospital (AP-HP), who passed away in October 2010. He is remembered as the physician who stunned the scientific community in 1959 with the first-ever series of multiple injections of bone marrow from voluntary, non-related donors to six Yugoslavian physicists who had been irradiated at a nuclear plant.

52 years after this ground-breaking event, **transplantation is experiencing spectacular growth** both in France (with a twofold increase over the last five years) and globally. Technical advances are such that almost any patient today can receive a transplantation from either a family donor (brother, sister, or even parents), a voluntary donor registered internationally (14 million to this day), cord blood (60,000 units in stock globally), or an autograft (transplantation of the patient's own bone marrow).

In the clinical domain, due to the particular dramatic advances in the "preparation or conditioning" of patients prior to graft injection (pre-transplantation), such preparations have become much less toxic, and stem cell transplantations are increasingly being offered to older and weaker patients, who - as recently as ten years ago - were excluded because of their inability to tolerate intensive therapy or heavy chemotherapy. *"So-called low-intensity or low-toxicity transplantations draw on therapies that are more targeted and less intensive than chemotherapy and/or radiotherapy. Such advances aiming to improve the survival of patients will be discussed at length during the Congress"*, says Professor Mohamad Mohty, Congress Scientific Chairman and Head of the Bone Marrow Transplantation Department at CHU Hôtel-Dieu, Nantes, France.

In addition, several discussions and communications will tackle the subject of **preventing and treating graft versus host disease** (GVH) thanks to new approaches aiming to attenuate the immune conflict between donor and receiver. *“Beyond curing the disease itself, we are intensifying our efforts toward minimizing potential post-transplant complications—GVH especially—in order to preserve the patients' quality of life and enable them to have a quick recovery with limited after-effects”*, adds Professor Mohamad Mohty

On the research front, the scientific community has been devoting a lot of attention recently to developments in cell therapy, with a particular focus on new types of cells called **mesenchymal stem cells**. Found in human fat and in the placenta, these can be multiplied several million times over and injected with various benefits.

Finally, **induced pluripotent stem cells** (iPS) might soon provide us with new graft sources, ultimately leading to therapies against degenerative neurological diseases, lower-limb arteritis, and autoimmune diseases; possibly even opening the door to autologous transplantation from lab-grown haematopoietic grafts cultivated from the patient's own skin tissue, e.g. in the treatment of medullary aplasia, leukaemia, etc.

A press conference will be held on Tuesday the 5<sup>th</sup> of April 2011 from 12.00 at the Palais des Congrès of Paris.

For more information regarding the EBMT 2011 Annual Congress, please visit the following website: <http://www.congrex.ch/ebmt2011/>.

#### **About the European Group for Blood and Marrow Transplantation (EBMT)**

The EBMT is a non-profit organisation that was established in 1974 in order to allow scientists and physicians involved in clinical bone marrow transplantation to share their experience and develop co-operative studies. The EBMT aims to promote all aspects associated with the transplantation of haematopoietic stem cells from all donor sources and donor types including basic and clinical research, education, standardisation, quality control, and accreditation for transplant procedures.

For further information about the EBMT, please visit the website: [www.ebmt.org](http://www.ebmt.org)

#### **Press contacts**

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