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PRESS RELEASE

Cancer patients call for action to make precision medicine in cancer a reality in Europe.

5 December 2017, Brussels, Belgium

Today in Brussels, the European Cancer Patient Coalition called for more concrete actions to increase access and awareness of cancer genetic testing and other types of biomarkers at the event held in the European Parliament. Genetic testing and other types of biomarker testing help to identify the “Achilles' heel” of different types of cancer, ensuring that the right person receives the right treatment at the right time. Hosted by MEP Marlene Mizzi (S&D, Malta), the event was focused on Cancer Biomarkers in the Era of Personalised Medicines. The discussion with policymakers and European experts in the field, the importance of biomarkers for people with cancer, and the necessary actions needed to make precision medicine in cancer a reality across Europe.

The European Cancer Patient Coalition called for more progress to be made towards a harmonised and more efficient regulatory framework which will increase access to and potentially reduce the cost of biomarker testing. The cancer patient organisation also highlighted the need for increased access and decreased waiting times for high-quality biomarker testing to make personalised healthcare more of a reality.

The European Cancer Patient Coalition President, Francesco De Lorenzo, said *“Biomarkers are key for quick and appropriate identification of precision medicines, but they also offer an enormous contribution to the sustainability of healthcare systems. Presently, we have biomarkers available for a number of cancer types, but research must be dedicated to identifying more biomarkers.”*

“It is completely unacceptable that with the already existing list of biomarkers, 60% of patients have not been proposed a biomarker testing by their oncologists,” he added, referring to the findings of a recent ECPC-EAPM patient survey on biomarker awareness.

Marlene Mizzi, MEP, stressed the need for more action on biomarkers awareness.

“It is of paramount importance that we work together to raise biomarker literacy amongst cancer patients across Europe. We need to increase patient understanding of biomarkers and endorse awareness campaigns that increase biomarker literacy by increasing patient knowledge on where they need to go to get biomarker testing,” she said during the event.

Genetic testing and other types of biomarker testing are already available for many types of cancer. These tests help to identify the people who may benefit from effective cancer treatment, ensure sustainable healthcare systems, and avoid treatment-related toxicity. However, their authorised use and reimbursement in the European Union varies by country, and access is often only available in large cancer centres. For those people who are able to

access biomarker testing, the waiting times for the results varies from 5 days in some member states to an entire month in others.

ECPC also launched an educational video animation on cancer biomarkers during the event. Aimed at policymakers, healthcare professionals and patients, the animation is set to raise awareness about the state of biomarker testing in Europe and increase the understanding of its benefits to individual's health and the healthcare systems.

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About the European Cancer Patient Coalition

The European Cancer Patient Coalition is the largest European cancer patients' umbrella organization.

The European Cancer Patient Coalition is the voice of cancer patients in Europe. With over 400 members, ECPC is Europe's largest umbrella cancer patients' association, covering all 28 EU member states and many other European and non-European countries. The European Cancer Patient Coalition represents patients affected by all types of cancers, from the rarest to the most common.

About Cancer Biomarkers

Cancer biomarkers are the molecules that are usually produced by cancer cells, which can then be detected in bodily fluids or tissues. When tested, such biomarkers can identify people who have or may be at risk of cancer and can also be used to monitor remission. Cancer biomarkers can also help select or predict patients who are likely to derive therapeutic benefit from specific medicines and treatments.

Notes to editors:

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