EuroHYP PRESS RELEASE

EMBARGOED, 24Jan2011 00.00 CET

Inducing hypothermia in stroke victims could dramatically boost survival rates, new research reveals

Stroke is the second largest killer in the world after Ischemic heart disease and currently there are a very limited number of treatments available when it hits. Now, scientists have found compelling evidence that cooling patients suffering from ischemic stroke by just a few degrees might not just greatly improve survival rates but also reduce the risk of long term disability.

Leading scientists meeting in Brussels on January 24 to review the latest scientific evidence are calling for the roll out of a large international, multicentre, phase III clinical trial that has the potential to bring concrete benefits to patients and to society within a short timeframe, but which needs EU funding to help it get off the ground. Their findings are contained in a report, **"The use of therapeutic cooling to improve survival rates – proposal for trial"**, which will be issued at the conference.

"Stroke is a major killer" says Dr Malcolm Macleod, Reader and Head of Experimental Neuroscience at the Centre for Clinical Brain Sciences at the University of Edinburgh, and Chief Investigator of HAIST, a pilot study of therapeutic hypothermia in acute ischemic stroke. *"Every day 1000 Europeans die from stroke – that's one every 90 seconds – and about twice that number survive but are disabled. Our estimates are that hypothermia might improve the outcome for more than 40,000 Europeans every year".* Speaking for EuroHYP, a network which brings together the leading academic experts from Europe, along with patient groups and representatives of European industries, he said "*The preliminary evidence is all there – now it is time for Europe to act"*

Therapeutic hypothermia, or cooling, is already used effectively in reducing ischemic brain injury following cardiac arrest and birth injuries. It acts by inducing a kind of hibernation in the brain, reducing the need for oxygen and preventing further damage. The technique is also being watched with interest by the European Space Agency because of its possible applications for the future of long distance space travel.

EuroHYP, in collaboration with the clinical trial units of universities, including Copenhagen/Malmø, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Utrecht, Erlangen and Helsinki, has become the driving force behind an international consortium that is bringing together the expertise and synergies essential for the large scale trial. *"The objective is the full scientific testing of the promising experimental methodologies around therapeutic cooling in 1,500 patients with acute ischemic stroke, with particular focus on those who currently do not have access to a truly effective treatment or who exhibit limited response to the existing, standard interventions"* says Prof. Dr. Stefan Schwab, Professor and Chair of the Department of Neurology at the Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nürnberg, Germany, who has been at the forefront of many hypothermia stroke trials conducted in the past.

Prof Schwab believes that: *"We know the financial situation is difficult, but based on current evidence the personal and economic benefits of avoiding stroke related death and disability means that the trial would pay for itself in less than a year. As the population ages this trial will become even more important, and a benefit of cooling demonstrated in the proposed study will set the stage for future studies with hypothermia, extending the eligibility of the treatment to even greater number of patients."*

However, according to Dr Macleod**,** the scientific know-how and technical and methodological expertise required are not available in any single European Member State. *"The only way to create a successful programme was to establish a Europe-wide research collaboration,"* he said. *"That's what we have done. The stage is set"*.

The number of hospitals participating is expected to be around 80 in total, from 21 countries in Europe, the countries being: Germany, Italy, UK, France, Spain, Poland, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Netherlands, Croatia, Belgium, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Norway, Portugal and Turkey.

Background:

The consortium led by EuroHYP / www.eurohyp.org / and with the support of ECRIN, the European Clinical Research Infrastructures Network, proposes a unique interdisciplinary research programme performed via the participation of leading European experts and stakeholders and the collaboration of scientists from the USA and Australia.

The internationally known leaders involved in the EuroHYP consortium represent a whole spectrum of scientific domains, from statistical design and analysis, stroke trial design, therapeutic hypothermia, ultrasound monitoring, imaging, biomarkers, health economics, and trial execution (implementation and monitoring). Moreover - beyond the academic experts - European patient and family advocacy groups and SMEs will be also actively involved in the implementation of the proposed research programme. Companies such as EMCOOLS, Elvido Medical Technology, QuickCool, Proteome Sciences, Randox Laboratories, Flowlab and GABO:mi, etc. are developing specific technologies, IT solutions and services.

The project will be led overall by *EuroHYP as a central coordinating hub.* However, the key components of the implementation of the trial will be directed and coordinated by dedicated experts, teams, and organisations associated to universities, university hospitals, and other related entities in Europe – all with ample experience in similar research programmes.

The workshop is organised by the ***European Stroke Research Network for Hypothermia (EuroHYP),*** the ***European Stroke Organisation (ESO),*** and ***Stroke Alliance for Europe (SAFE)*** with the support of the ***World Stroke Organisation (WSO), Society for Cryobiology*** and the ***European Space Agency (ESA).***

Where:
Brussels, Jan 24, 2011 at the Federation of Belgian Enterprises, Rue Ravenstein n. 4, starting at 10 am.

For further information, images, to attend the workshop or to receive a copy of the report:
"The use of therapeutic cooling to improve survival rates – proposal for trial"
Please contact:
Roberta Bonometti, Press Officer, Tel: + 44 7770 211955; roberta@bonometti.freeserve.co.uk
Dr Malcolm Macleod +447786 265166
www.eurohyp.org