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Europe

Commission Steps up Action on Neurodegenerative Conditions

The Commission has recently adopted concrete proposals to deal with Alzheimer's disease, dementias and other neurodegenerative conditions. There are currently over seven million people with Alzheimer's disease and related disorders in Europe and it is predicted that this number will double in the next 20 years. Europe must plan, invest and cooperate to control the social costs of these diseases while providing patients with the best care available.

The Commission proposes four main areas of action. The objective of this European initiative is to tackle the main problems posed by Alzheimer's disease and dementias in four key areas:

Acting early to diagnose dementia and to reduce the risk of dementia in the first place;

Improving research coordination between EU countries;

Sharing of best practice, and

Providing a forum to reflect on rights, autonomy and dignity of patients.

Alzheimer's disease and related disorders have been identified by the EU countries as an area where the first Joint Programming of research activities should be launched. Joint Programming addresses EU countries willing to engage in the development of a common Strategic Research Agenda which will allow their participation on a variable geometry basis. 20 countries in Europe have already shown their willingness to pool resources and to conduct research in an area where a common initiative would offer major added value compared with the current, fragmented research efforts in Europe.

This pilot Joint Programming initiative should pave the way for other Joint Programming initiatives in the future.

For more information, please visit:

http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_information/dissemination/diseases/alzheimer_en.htm

A H1N1: Commission Announces Target and Priority Groups for Vaccination

The European Union Health Security Committee and the Early Warning and Response authorities (HSC/EWRS) have adopted a policy statement proposed by the European Commission which outlines a shared European approach towards identifying target and priority groups for A H1N1 vaccination.

On the basis of current scientific evidence and taking into account guidance by the European Centre for Disease Control and the World Health Organisation, the HSC/EWRS statement recommends the following groups as constituting the first priority groups for A H1N1 vaccination:

All persons from 6 months old with underlying chronic conditions (e.g. Chronic respiratory diseases; chronic cardiovascular diseases and persons with congenital or acquired immunodeficiency) starting with those with most severe symptoms;

Pregnant women, and

Healthcare workers.

Once these first priority groups have been vaccinated, the vaccination proceeds until the national targets have been met.

The statement stresses that it is the responsibility and mandate of each Member State to develop a vaccination strategy for Influenza A H1N1. Each country identifies national target groups that are defined as all those population groups where A H1N1 vaccination is recommended. In some cases, this may be the entire population and in other cases only specific groups. However, it is unlikely that the vaccine will be immediately available for all target groups at the same time and therefore, it is necessary to define priority groups.

For more information, please visit:

http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_threats/com/Influenza/novelflu_en.htm

610 Million euro to Support 106 New Health Research Projects

Funding comes under the Seventh Framework Programme for Research (FP7) These projects cover issues such as diagnostics, new therapies and vaccines. They have been selected through the third call for proposals of the Health Programme of FP7. A total of 679 proposals were submitted. Evaluation was performed with the help of international experts in the health research field. The 106 successful projects will now enter into final negotiation phase.

The projects selected cover a wide range of research areas such as suitability, safety and efficacy of therapies, innovative therapies, brain and brain-related diseases, infectious diseases (HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, emerging epidemics), major diseases (diabetes, obesity, cardiovascular diseases), rare diseases, and patient safety.

The main research areas to be funded are biotechnology, generic tools and medical technologies for human health (a budget of 142 million euro is expected for a total of 19 projects), translating research for human health (a total funding of 328 million euro is to be awarded to 43 consortia), optimising the delivery of healthcare to European citizens (a budget of 64 million euro will be distributed to 22 projects) and other actions such as specific international cooperation actions (76 million euro is to be awarded to 22 consortia).

The geographical distribution of the partner countries for proposals retained is very diverse. In addition to EU Member States, another 53 countries are represented, including Croatia, Iceland, Israel, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland, FYROM, Turkey, USA, Russia, Tanzania, Uganda, India, South Africa, Brazil, Rep. of Korea, Argentina, Australia, Cameroon, Ghana, Niger, Benin, China, Gabon, Kenya, Nicaragua, Nigeria and Togo.

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