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Leading Heart Advocates Launch Afib Task Force in Brussels

Leaders from policy, medical and patient environments address European heart health in joint approach

On November 29th 2011 in the European Parliament (Brussels), Cristian Busoi MEP, along with European heart advocates, announced the launch of their new AFib Task Force. The Task Force has been established to help address the increasing challenge posed by Atrial Fibrillation (AFib), a cost driver for European health care systems:

AFib is the most common form of cardiac arrhythmia, already affecting more than 6 million Europeans, and will increase in prevalence as Europe's population ages. Although AFib is associated with heart failure, hypertension, diabetes mellitus, and previous coronary heart disease; a large proportion of patients have no identifiable risk factors, making proven prevention strategies for the disease very difficult to establish.

"EU healthcare is under extreme financial pressure; we have to make important choices regarding the diseases on which we focus and the resources we allocate to their management" said Mr. Busoi. He continued: "Given the burden this disease places on patients and healthcare systems and its rapidly increasing prevalence, the members of the Task Force have identified an urgent need for increased awareness and improved treatment of AFib. At a time when the EU is focusing on deploying innovative solutions for active and healthy ageing for Europeans, ensuring effective treatment for conditions like AFib could help both current and future generations to enjoy more active and productive lives."

The Task Force has been established to provide a multidisciplinary approach, combining expertise and efforts from the medical, policy and patient advocacy environments. It aims to enhance public awareness of AFib, bringing together medical experts, patient organisations and policy makers from EU Member States to create the synergies that will help address AFib efficiently and effectively. The initiative will provide a platform for all stakeholders from all Member States concerned with AFib to work together to create solutions that will improve the treatment and management of AFib patients. Doing so, the Task Force wants to take a close look at the state of implementation of treatment guidelines in Member States and the adoption of recent survey findings in patient pathways. Here, what is best for the patient will be the main driver; this means to ensure that the various options are all considered, be they pharmaceutical interventions or surgical therapy like catheter ablation.

"We believe that the personal burden on individuals and the economic impact of AFib for healthcare providers needs urgent attention'', said Trudie Lobban MBE Founder and CEO of Atrial Fibrillation Association and member of the AFib Task Force.

The founding members of Task Force stressed that their initiative will take an inclusive approach, inviting European stakeholders involved in the fight against AFib to collaborate and create a broader movement. The AFib Task Force wants to unite and support European policy makers and healthcare professionals in implementing appropriate and effective treatment for all patients across the European Union.

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