

## PRESS RELEASE

### **Life is possible for patients with severe asthma Provided that they have accurate diagnosis**

**Brussels, 1<sup>st</sup> May 2018 – WORLD ASTHMA DAY** – Today European asthma patients are joining voices under the theme “Never too early, never too late” to ask for more research on the causes of asthma. Patients should be able to receive a more accurate diagnosis to enable them to have better lives.

Although most patients are able to control their asthma with current treatments, the basic solutions do not help all patients. (1) Around 5-10% of asthma patients are dealing with severe asthma, a set of different disease sub-types that greatly complicates breathing every day, putting people off work and in hospital suddenly (2) because of asthma attacks that can be fatal. (3)

New disciplines and technology allow asthma to be broken down and look deeper into the underlying mechanisms causing it. Some developments have been a clearer definition of severe asthma (4) and the development of more targeted treatments and approach to control some subtypes of severe asthma.

EFA President Mikaela Odemyr said: “We hope all asthma patients are controlled in the near future and that is why we have launched our *Severely, Asthma!* Project, featuring patients who have experience living with severe asthma and solving the impacts this disease has in their daily life”.

It is the case of Peter, our first *Severely, Asthma!* patient. After 60 years of struggle with severe asthma, he can finally manage it thanks to new treatments and a real partnership with the specialists that has led him to live without an asthma attack in the last 2 years. (5)

No cure has been found for asthma yet. But scientists have clarified now there is not one but several *asthmas*, a complex inflammatory disease that behaves differently depending on how genes, proteins, or exposure to environmental factors harmful to human health, interlink. The combinations are infinite and that explains why the healthcare community is taking asthma and allergies as pilot diseases for the development of personalised medicine.

A healthcare system that embraces patients, treating individuals instead of diseases, might be starting now with personalised medicine. The approach looks at the different elements involved in the disease and the patients’ lifestyle and environment to better predict disease behaviour and treatments that work. (6)

Personalised medicine allows people to participate in the management of their health by having access to information about disease prevention and treatment. Yet, to set this new paradigm, patients must be at the centre of the process and become active partners to innovate in the development of medicines and how healthcare systems are structured.

**Notes to editors:**

- (1) Asthma is characterised by crisis attacks during which the bronchi get inflamed, creating extra mucus as a defensive response to the inflammation, narrowing the path for oxygen and leading to difficulty of breathing. Asthma crisis are triggered by different elements depending on the person: physical exercise, smoking or smokes of cigarettes, pollen, dust, stress, cold or hot weather, perfumes, air pollution and sometimes even a cold. There are three categories of asthma based on the intensity and frequency of the symptoms: mild, moderate, severe. In this very last case, the treatments are not enough to avoid the symptoms.
- (2) European Lung White Book, European Respiratory Society: <https://www.erswhitebook.org/chapters/adult-asthma/>
- (3) 7,100 people died from asthma in 2015, according to Eurostat statistics 'Causes of death - deaths by country of residence and occurrence', Last update: 28/02/18 [Accessed 26/04/2018]: <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do>
- (4) 'ERS/ATS guidelines on definition, evaluation and treatment of severe asthma', Fan Chung et Al., European Respiratory Journal, 01/01/2014 [Accessed 26/04/2018]: <http://erj.ersjournals.com/content/43/2/343>
- (5) The **Severely, Asthma! Project** is an EFA initiative to raise awareness about the complexity of asthma and exposing the many factors affecting people living with severe asthma. Through 6 videos of severe asthma patients' testimonials, EFA will show that severe asthma can become controlled with the right diagnosis and the right treatment, in part because new research towards personalised treatments are providing patients with more treatment options <http://www.efanet.org/resources/library/3296-severely-asthma-project> Watch Peter's video in our Youtube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R4gTxIzK9P8>
- (6) Although known and having medicines that allow preventing and controlling the symptoms, there is still progress to make to improve asthma diagnosis, reduce asthma attacks, emergency healthcare use and asthma deaths. In this vision, 28 associations have signed in 2016 the **Malaga-London Declaration** to create a coordinated and pan-European research. A lot of work is yet to be done, with funding still very much needed, to achieve the European Asthma Research and Innovation Partnership (EARIP)'s goal of reducing asthma deaths in Europe by 25% within ten years and by 50% within 20 years. <http://www.efanet.org/malaga-london-declaration/>

**The European Federation of Allergy and Airways Diseases Patients' Associations (EFA)** is a network of 43 allergy, asthma and COPD patients' organisations in 25 European countries and it works for European patients with allergy, asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) to live uncompromised lives, have the right and access to the best quality care and a safe environment.

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