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European Oncology Nursing Society (EONS) calls for adopting new guidelines across Europe to protect nurses and patients involved in cancer treatment

Geneva, Switzerland – March 28th 2008: The European Oncology Nursing Society (EONS) is today calling for new guidelines to be adopted across Europe to help all nurses involved in cancer care manage extravasations, thereby improving treatment for cancer patients overall.

Extravasation is caused by the leaking of fluids used in chemotherapy from the blood vessels into surrounding tissue, which can lead to severe and permanent disabilityⁱ. It is relatively uncommon, estimated to occur in 0.1% to 1.0% of all anthracycline treatmentsⁱⁱ, however it can be debilitating, disabling and requires immediate attention from those involved in administering intravenous chemotherapy. Over 100,000 doses of chemotherapy and a million intravenous (IV) infusions are given every day worldwideⁱⁱⁱ.

'Currently the management of this potentially debilitating condition is very inconsistent across Europe,' said Yvonne Wengström, Chair of the EONS task force. 'Most nurses do not receive any specific training on how to manage the condition should it occur. For this reason, the new guidelines and their implementation are very important for safeguarding patients and

nurses from these type of events occurring in the first place, as well as dealing with them appropriately when they do'.

The guidelines, which have been specifically developed for nurses, are officially launched today at the 6th EONS Spring Convention, 'New ways of working: innovation in cancer nursing practice'.

Based on existing literature, the guidelines support the use of Savene®, as a first-line, gold-standard treatment for anthracycline extravasation. Savene® is the only licensed antidote to counteract the condition and is changing the way the complication of anthracycline extravasation is managed^{iv}.

Along with the pain, discomfort and inconvenience caused to the patient as a result of extravasation, it is also associated with a number of other adverse factors, such as longer hospital stays, increased length of follow up care, need for physical therapy, and loss of earnings for the patient as well as psychological trauma^v.

Helen Roe, Consultant Cancer Nurse and Chair of the UK Oncology Nursing Society (UKONS) Chemotherapy Forum says that although extravasations are not a frequently seen side-effect associated with chemotherapy, they have the potential to cause long-term consequences: 'Nurses play a key role in the management of extravasation and these evidence-based guidelines support nursing practice through prevention, recognition and essentially the management of extravasations.'

The guidelines are available for download from the EONS website: <http://www.cancerworld.org/CancerWorld/getStaticModFile.aspx?id=1987>

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References

ⁱ Langer SW, Jensen PB, Sehested M. Other uses of dexrazoxane: savene, the first proven antidote against anthracycline extravasation injuries. *Cardiovasc Toxicol* 2007; 7: 151-153.

ⁱⁱ Buter J. Savene (dexrazoxane): an effective nonsurgical treatment for anthracycline extravasation. *Hospital Pharmacy Europe* 2007; 33: 38-9.

ⁱⁱⁱ European Oncology Nurses Society
http://www.cancerworld.org/CancerWorld/moduleStaticPage.aspx?id=3891&id_sito=2&id_stato=1 [accessed March 2008]

^{iv} European Oncology Nurses Society
http://www.cancerworld.org/CancerWorld/moduleStaticPage.aspx?id=3891&id_sito=2&id_stato=1 [accessed March 2008]

^v European Oncology Nurses Society
http://www.cancerworld.org/CancerWorld/moduleStaticPage.aspx?id=3891&id_sito=2&id_stato=1 [accessed March 2008]