UNITED EUROPEAN GASTROENTEROLOGY FEDERATION

PRESS RELEASE

Revolution in endoscopy

Great opportunities in early diagnosis of cancer: experts at Europe's largest Gastroenterology Congress in Vienna to present new techniques in gastroscopy and colonoscopy

(Vienna, 12 June 2008) Early diagnosis is the decisive weapon in combating cancer of the stomach and the bowel. New endoscopy techniques opening up amazing new possibilities form one of the foci of the 16th United Gastro-enterology Week (UEGW) from 18th to 22nd October 2008 in Vienna. 12,000 scientists representing more than 75 countries are anticipated at the largest European congress of its kind.

In the field of early diagnosis endomicroscopy offers a whole range of new opportunities. "This technique enables us to see tumour cells for the first time without conducting biopsies," says Prof Markus F. Neurath of the University Clinic of Mainz in Germany, where this examination method was used for the first time. A microscope in the tip of the endoscope provides images with a thousand times magnification of the mucosa of the bowel and its vessels. A laser beam scanning the region can penetrate a quarter of a millimetre below the surface of the mucosa. That makes it possible to identify, for example, how a tumour is growing and the depth of its location. In future, endomicroscopy will in many cases eliminate the need to take tissue samples. "We can concentrate on those cases where we need detailed information on cell development, which we cannot get from endomicroscopy," says Prof Neurath. That not only makes things easier for the patients, but also gives considerable cost savings.

Detecting tumours

While endomicroscopy serves to determine how dangerous tumours are, narrow band imaging (NBI) helps to detect them. NBI works with short-wave blue light, which gives a strong contrast between the mucosa and the blood vessels. These contrasts permit much simpler identification of suspicious changes than it is possible with normal white light. In combination with HDTV (high definition television) NBI generates images with an accuracy in detail that was previously not possible in endoscopy. "NBI improves the

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chances of discovering cancer at very early stages. The time benefit may be as much as several months," explains Dr Brian P. Saunders of St. Mark's Hospital in London. In future this technique too might help reduce the number of biopsies needed. Right now a classification is being developed that will enable the physician to distinguish harmless polyps from possibly malignant ones straight away during endoscopy.

Numerous additional congress highlights

Apart from endoscopy techniques, the congress will focus on illnesses of the stomach, intestine and liver. Additional highlights include the latest research results on pancreatic and biliary diseases as well as progress in the treatment of hepatitis and cirrhosis. Other issues to be dealt with at the congress and affecting millions of people include chronic inflammatory intestinal disorders and gastroesophageal diseases.

The 16th United European Gastroenterology Week offers journalists an opportunity to obtain expert information first hand on numerous issues relating to current health policies. Interview partners will be available at the press conferences (information on this to follow soon) as well as in the press centre specially set up for this purpose. Additional information on the congress as well as the full programme of events is also available online at: www.uegw.org.

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