

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **UEGW: Non-alcoholic fatty liver disease is widespread and often underestimated**

#### **Chronic liver disorders are often associated with cardiovascular diseases**

**(Vienna, 6 October 2008) Often underestimated and at the same time highly dangerous: non-alcoholic fatty liver disease is very serious and can develop into liver cirrhosis and cause cardiovascular diseases to worsen. However, experts claim that neither patients nor doctors are currently taking the disease seriously enough. Non-alcoholic fatty liver disease will be an important topic at the 16<sup>th</sup> United European Gastroenterology Week (UEGW) from 18-22 October in Vienna. 12,000 scientists from more than 75 countries are expected to take part in the largest European congress of its kind.**

Fatty liver is not always the result of excessive alcohol consumption. Prof. Vlad Ratziu of Pitie-Salpêtrière Hospital in Paris/France estimates that 20-30 per cent of the population suffers from non-alcoholic fatty liver disease. It is often associated with diabetes and being overweight – and therefore significantly increases the risk of developing a serious cardiovascular disease. At the same time, there is also an increased risk of developing liver cirrhosis.

#### **The cause: an unhealthy lifestyle**

“Because obesity and diabetes are increasing in the populations of developed countries and the number of children with fatty liver is also rising, we have to expect that in the future ever more and ever younger people will develop cirrhosis as a consequence of non-alcoholic fatty liver disease”, said Prof. Ratziu. Poor nutrition and lack of exercise are often at the root of this alarming development.

The disease can often be prevented from spreading seriously by making changes to lifestyle and early diagnosis. Important progress is also being made in its treatment. Highly promising trials are underway involving medicine still being developed, which attacks the development of the disease directly.

**Up-to-date and first hand information for journalists**

The 16<sup>th</sup> United European Gastroenterology Week in Vienna offers journalists the opportunity to obtain first hand expert information on numerous health issues affecting the world today. International speakers will be available to answer questions at the press conferences and at the press centre that we will set up. For more information on the congress and the complete schedule for the conference, please refer to the following website: <http://uegw08.uegf.org/>

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