



**'WOMEN AGAINST CERVICAL CANCER' – A NEW INTERNATIONAL NETWORK COMMITTED TO EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH EDUCATION**

*Survey reveals significant gaps in knowledge and information among women cause unnecessary stress and anxiety about a preventable disease*

**Nice, France, 12 November 2008** - New survey results announced today, reveal a significant lack of information and education about the prevention, treatment and consequences of cervical cancer is leaving women unnecessarily worried and anxious.<sup>i</sup> Cervical cancer is largely preventable as a result of powerful tools now available, however due to lack of knowledge, information and access nearly 280,000 women still die from the disease every year, making it the second leading cause of cancer death in women worldwide.<sup>ii,iii,iv</sup>

The new survey results, conducted among European women who had received an abnormal cell diagnosis following a cervical screening test, accompany the launch of the Women Against Cervical Cancer (WACC) Network, a new international network of voluntary organisations, institutions, NGOs and individuals committed to the fight against cervical cancer. Through educational initiatives aimed at health professionals and the general public, the goal of the WACC Network and its members is to increase awareness of the causes and preventative measures associated with cervical cancer. This is a cause that is supported by the survey results, where up to 82% of the women surveyed said there was an absolute need for more information on cervical cancer, human papillomavirus (HPV), and its prevention.<sup>i</sup>

“Although the recent availability of the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) vaccine to prevent cervical cancer has meant that information and knowledge of the disease and its causes has been increased, there is still a continued and urgent need for public education,” said Doctor Joseph Monsonego, President of EUROGIN and WACC, France. “By arming women with the knowledge of how to prevent and protect against cervical cancer and by supporting them through treatment and beyond, we will be able to reduce the significant emotional and physical burden experienced. Through the WACC Network and its members we can fill this knowledge gap and provide the support and reassurance that is clearly needed.”

About half a million women are diagnosed with cervical cancer worldwide every year, and this number is showing increasing trends among many populations.<sup>v</sup> However, it is now possible to successfully prevent this cancer through screenings and vaccination.<sup>iii,iv</sup>

In addition to providing information and education about prevention, the WACC Network aims to accompany women before, during and after medical care for cervical cancer. This will be achieved by providing a forum for mutual help and support among women; providing educational materials to assist women during and after treatment; and offering psychological support for those women who desire it—another clear need identified in the survey results.

Commenting about the newly formed WACC Network, Professor Sergio Pecorelli, Chairman, Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, University of Brascia, Italy said; “The WACC Network’s primary goal is to address the lack of information, education and support that currently exists for cervical cancer – its prevention and its treatment. Most importantly, the emotional consequences and - as highlighted in our survey - the consequences on their future as mothers, are very important and real concerns among women faced with an abnormal test result. Women need to know and be reassured that an abnormal test, when caught early, means that most women can be treated and go on to have a successful family life.”

The WACC Network has been created under the auspices of EUROGIN (EUropean Research Organization on Genital Infection and Neoplasia). At the launch, world experts including groups such as the World Health Organisation (WHO), International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO) and the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) and a number of professional and patient organisations, came together to add their signatures to a manifesto committing to the fight against cervical cancer.

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## **Notes to Editors**

### **About Cervical Cancer**

Cervical cancer, or cancer of the cervix (the organ connecting the uterus and vagina), affects nearly 500,000 women worldwide every year.<sup>iii</sup> It has the highest mortality of cancers in all women in the developing world, and is the second most common cancer among women.<sup>iii</sup>

There are two main types of cervical cancer; squamous cell carcinoma (approximately 80-90% of all cervical cancers), and adenocarcinoma.<sup>vi</sup> Cervical cancer is usually a slow-growing cancer, and may not carry any symptoms until late stages of the disease.<sup>vii</sup> Although cervical

cancer starts from cells with pre-cancerous changes, only some women with pre-cancers will develop invasive cervical cancer.<sup>vi</sup>

Human Papillomavirus (HPV) is estimated to cause 100% of all cervical cancers.<sup>iii</sup> Cervical screening and HPV vaccination are the two prominent options that—combined—can ensure better disease prevention and healthcare. The WACC Network advocates for their due and equitable implementation to end cervical cancer.

### **About the Women Against Cervical Cancer Network**

The Women Against Cervical Cancer (WACC) Network, part of the WACC Foundation, is a new international network of voluntary organisations, institutions, NGOs and individuals committed to the fight against cervical cancer. The WACC Network's vision is a world where all women are informed about human papillomavirus (HPV), its associated diseases, and how to prevent and control cervical cancer, so they can make informed choices and take action to eliminate the diseases.

The WACC Foundation, based in Geneva, has the status of a Swiss charity organization of public benefit, approved by the Swiss authorities in June 2008. The Foundation encompasses the WACC Forum, Network, Education, Surveys, Award, and its official activities. The Foundation's will, through fundraising activities, provide and support women's education on cervical cancer, and to promote women's health and cervical cancer prevention.

The foundation is independent of political or commercial interests, and does not replace any organization or health leaders working in this field.

### **About EUROGIN**

EUROGIN is the leading international multidisciplinary organisation involved in research, training, screening, prevention and information concerning genital infections, pre-cancers and cancers in women. Established 20 years ago, EUROGIN has identified an urgent need for a global network to provide education with a specific focus on women and the general public. The WACC Network will aim to deliver this through its WACC Forum, Education, Award and Survey activities.

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Or visit [www.eurogin.com/wacc](http://www.eurogin.com/wacc)

**References:**

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