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Press Release

EU PROJECT NanoDiaRA: SEMINAR ON “SCIENCE MEETS SOCIETY”

Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler, December 21, 2010. – The EU project “Development of novel nanotechnology based diagnostic systems for Rheumatoid Arthritis and Osteoarthritis” (NanoDiaRA) held its first seminar on “Science meets Society”: Dr.-Ing. Margarethe Hofmann (scientific coordination of NanoDiaRA) explained that the EU project deals with very complex fields in the early diagnosis of arthritis and its treatment and that different disciplines are working together to develop nanotechnology-based products which are safe for the patients as well as for people handling such nanoparticles. The NanoDiaRA consortium would like to inform the general public about its work as early as possible and welcomes feedback on their actions.

As NanoDiaRA research is targeted at helping patients, Professor em. Robin Poole (McGill University, Montreal, Canada and former Scientific Director of the Canadian Arthritis Network, CAN), who was involved in pioneering the involvement of patients (consumers) in the CAN research network, talked about the considerable contributions that consumers have made to Canada’s arthritis research and communication programs. He explained that there were still obstacles to include them in the day-to-day decision-making of research and its management while the consumers were often suffering from disabilities and pain. However, the opinions and the contributions of these consumers were of great value for research and knowledge dissemination programmes. Even governmental departments in Canada would now take recommendations by these consumers very seriously.

Information about nanoparticles and their applications in pre-clinical diagnostics and research were the topics of the following presentations. Professor Jean-Paul Vallée, radiologist at the University Hospital of Geneva, described various research activities for early diagnosis using different nanoparticles already on the market such as gadolinium or iron oxide based contrast agents used for detecting liver cancer. Nanomaterials on which such contrast agents are based are Professor Heinrich Hofmann’s field of research (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne). His aim is to develop safer iron oxide nanoparticles showing more reliable properties and lacking toxicity, both *in vivo* and in the environment.

Nanotechnology and the development of nanoparticles are state-of-the-art and one might expect that after so many years of research there should be enough knowledge about nanoparticles and their behaviour in humans. Professor Brigitte von Rechenberg, Veterinary Faculty of the University of Zurich, described her collaborative pre-

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clinical work in which she used different kinds of iron oxide nanoparticles to examine the body's response to particles with different coatings and thereby different properties in health and inflammation.

Overall, it was concluded that the development of nanoparticles in the field of nanomedicine would only make sense with a targeted goal, a targeted application and the knowledge, the expertise and an effective collaborating network of medical doctors, engineers and scientists. Furthermore, the involvement of pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies which are able to transfer such multidisciplinary research into a product for the patient/consumer was also needed. The EU-funded NanoDiaRA project offers all these essential ingredients and is working hard to achieve success.

(Contact Professor em. Robin Poole: a.poole@mcgill.ca)

The project "Development of novel nanotechnology based diagnostic systems for rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis (NanoDiaRA)" is funded by the 7th Framework Programme of the European Union. Its consortium consists of 15 European partners from both university and non-university institutions. The coordinator of the NanoDiaRA project is the Europäische Akademie zur Erforschung von Folgen wissenschaftlich-technischer Entwicklungen Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler gGmbH, Germany (www.ea-aw.eu) dealing with the scientific study of the consequences of scientific and technological advances for individuals, society and the natural environment. MatSearch Consulting Hofmann, Switzerland (www.matsearch.ch), an independent consulting organization specialized in the field of materials science and technology, is responsible for the scientific coordination.

Further information: www.nanodiara.eu