



NEWS RELEASE
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Reclaim a life free of pain

Diabetics now have an option to improve their quality-of-life

Kuala Lumpur, 7 October, 2011 – Diabetic patients suffering from painful diabetic peripheral neuropathy (pDPN), or more commonly referred to as diabetic nerve pain, often remain untreated. Due to the challenges in diagnosing pDPN, patients learn to adapt to living with their pain. With new developments in pain management, researchers have discovered that this is no longer necessary.

pDPN is a condition in which patients with diabetes experience burning pain, pins and needles, or shooting pain in the feet and hands.^{1 2} One in five diabetic patients suffers from this affliction and the prevalence of this condition continues to rise.^{3 4} Because of the personalised nature of pain, (pDPN) can be difficult to identify. This leads to challenges in the treatment process.

There is little awareness about neuropathic pain, even more so what it means by peripheral neuropathy? The peripheral nervous system (PNS) is one of the two major divisions of the nervous system. The other is the central nervous system (CNS) which is made up of the brain and spinal cord. The nerves in the PNS connect the CNS to sensory organs (such as the eye and ear), other organs of the body, muscles, blood vessels and glands.⁵

“Patients develop neuropathic pain when one or more of their nerves are damaged. There are multiple factors that contribute to the nerve damage. It could be part of a disorder, disease or condition. pDPN is an example of nerve damage due to a condition (diabetes),” said Professor K.J. Goh, Professor, Division of Neurology, University Malaya Medical Centre.

Symptoms of neuropathic pain include shooting and burning pain, a tingling sensation or numbness. “In order to diagnose peripheral neuropathy, we will arrange for the patient to undergo a series of neurological examinations to identify the cause and the extent of the nerve damage,” added Prof Goh.

Speaking on the importance of pain management amongst diabetic patients, Professor Dato’ Dr Mafauzy Mohamed, Professor of Medicine and Campus Director, University Sains Malaysia, Kelantan, asserts that diabetic patients should not have to live with the pain, “The effects of

diabetic peripheral neuropathy are severe and very painful. This pain can create difficulties to everyday life. Pain management allows people with this condition to improve their quality of life.”

According to the third National Health and Morbidity Survey completed in 2006, the prevalence of diabetes has increased to 14.9%. Compared to a decade ago, prevalence of diabetes was only at 8.3%. Diabetes prevalence in Malaysia has almost doubled in the last decade (at a rate faster than the International Diabetes Federation’s prediction) in parallel with doubling of overweight/ obesity in the population.⁶ 50% of local patients who have been diagnosed with diabetes for the past 6 to 10 years were found to have pDPN.⁷

“All the research data are indicating an increase in the prevalence of diabetes both globally and locally, and as the disease progresses over time, nerve damage will certainly be one of the complications of the condition. Therefore it is important to assist diabetic patients to manage the pain resulting from diabetes complications,” added Prof Dato’ Dr Mafauzy.

pDPN can be extremely debilitating. The effects of this disease often disrupt walking, sleep, work, mood and general everyday activity. Because pain is so subjective and personalised in nature, pDPN is frequently underreported and untreated.

58 percent of patients are unaware that the pain they experience is being caused by diabetes.⁸ It is important that diabetic patients are guided by their physicians to the right treatment options to aid in the management of this painful condition.

“In April this year, the American Academy of Neurology (AAN), the American Association of Neuromuscular and Electrodiagnostic Medicine and the American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation released a joint report noting the most effective treatments for diabetic nerve pain. According to the guideline, Pregabalin is the only Level A recommendation based on robust evidence showing that Pregabalin is effective in treating diabetic nerve pain.”

Several clinical trials that were evaluating Pregabalin found that patients taking Pregabalin experienced less pain in comparison with those that were taking a placebo. Some patients found relief in as soon as one week, while for others it may take longer.^{9 10 11}

Dr Gene Lee, Pfizer’s Medical Advisor, who was moderating the media workshop commented, “Pfizer is committed to drive the disease awareness in the area of pain and urge patient to discuss treatment options with their doctors. pDPN remains an under-diagnosed condition in many parts of the world, in large part due to low awareness and understanding of the condition and the fact that there are few proven treatment options available.”

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We also collaborate closely with public and private health care providers, and communities to support and expand access to reliable, affordable health care in Malaysia. Pfizer Malaysia began operations in 1964, and every day, some 500 colleagues throughout the country work to advance wellness and make a difference for all who rely on us.

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¹ National Diabetes Information Clearinghouse. Diabetic Neuropathies : The Nerve Damage of Diabetes. February 2009. Available at : <http://diabetes.niddk.nih.gov/dm/pubs/neuropathies/>

² Brigham and Women's Hospital. Translational Pain Research. Available at <http://www.brighamandwomens.org/paintrials/diabeticneuropathypain.aspx>. Accessed on July 7, 2009.

³ Schmaier KE. Epidemiology and impact on quality of life of postherpetic neuralgia and painful diabetic neuropathy *Clin J Pain*. 2002;18:350-354

⁴ Centers of Disease Control and Prevention. National Diabetes Fact Sheet 2011. Available at : http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/pubs/pdf/ndfs_2011.pdf

⁵ <http://www.medterms.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=8258>. Accessed on September 27, 2011

⁶ http://www.crc.gov.my/documents/abstract/prevalenceOfDiabetes_ppt.pdf. Accessed on September 27, 2011

⁷ The Prevalence of Diabetic Peripheral Neuropathy in an Outpatient Setting. O Mimi, MMed, C L Teng, Mmed, Y C Chia, MRCP http://www.e-mjm.org/2003/v58n4/Diabetic_Peripheral_Neuropathy.pdf. Accessed on September 22, 2011

⁸ American Diabetes Association. *Forefront*. Many with Diabetes Are Unaware of Diabetic Neuropathy. Winter/Spring 2007.

⁹ Richter, Ralph W., Portenoy, Russell, et al. Relief of Painful Diabetic Peripheral Neuropathy With Pregabalin: A Randomized, Placebo-Controlled Trial. American Pain Society; 2005.

¹⁰ Rosenstock, Julio, Tuchman, Michael, et al. Pregabalin for the treatment of painful diabetic peripheral neuropathy. Dallas Diabetes & Endo Research Center, Dallas, TX: November 20, 2003.

¹¹ Lesser, H., MD, PhD, Sharma, U., PhD, et al. Pregabalin relieves symptoms of painful diabetic neuropathy. Pfizer Global Research and Development, Ann Arbor, MI: 2004.