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International Association for the Study of Pain (IASP) Declares the Global Year Against Pain in Women

'Real Women, Real Pain' Campaign Highlights the Suffering Caused by Disparities in Pain Recognition and Treatment in Women Around the World

Seattle, WA – October 15, 2007 — Today, the International Association for the Study of Pain (IASP) has declared 2008 the *Global Year Against Pain in Women* to draw attention to the significant impact of chronic pain on women and the need for more effective care. Lack of awareness of pain issues affecting women and gender disparities in treatment and research contribute to the suffering of millions of women.

"Chronic pain affects a higher proportion of women than men, but unfortunately they are also less likely to receive treatment compared to men due to various cultural, economic and political barriers," said Troels S. Jensen, MD, President of IASP, Professor of Experimental and Clinical Pain Research, University of Aarhus, Aarhus, Denmark. "IASP hopes to provide a voice to these women by drawing attention to this global issue as a first step towards reducing pain and suffering of women around the world."

Real Women, Real Pain

Research has shown that women generally experience more recurrent pain, more severe pain and longer lasting pain than men. Chronic pain conditions which affect women more than men include fibromyalgia, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis, chronic pelvic pain, temporomandibular joint disorder (i.e., TMJ) and migraine headache.

Women appear to experience pain differently than men, although the reason is not entirely understood. It is believed that this difference is due to numerous biological reasons including genetic, hormonal and pharmacological factors/influences. In addition, psychosocial and cultural disease factors/influences play an important role in how women experience pain.

Taking Action
Over the next year, the 'Real Women, Real Pain' campaign will educate the public, healthcare providers and government leaders/agencies about the lack of diagnosis and adequate treatment of chronic pain in women. This will help to:

- Increase awareness of pain conditions predominantly affecting women and help women and healthcare providers recognize signs and symptoms
- Raise awareness of disparities between female/male pain issues
- Empower women to become advocates for themselves and others, by encouraging them to affirm their pain is real and seek proper treatment
- Increase female-specific research
- Encourage the development of new female-specific treatment options

To further these objectives, IASP will initiate a number of national and local activities in conjunction with their 69 local chapters worldwide. A special issue of the IASP journal *Pain* will be dedicated to pain in women in November 2007. The IASP website will also feature campaign information including local ISAP chapter initiatives.

Gender Inequalities in Health Care
Certain pain conditions commonly affecting women often do not receive adequate attention as historically medical research has heavily relied on male populations and conditions affecting them. The result of this male-centric research approach is that women continue to be treated based on studies in which they may not have been adequately represented.

Access to healthcare services, particularly in poverty stricken areas of the developing world, can act as a barrier for women seeking help for pain conditions.

Cultural factors also influence a woman's likelihood of seeking treatment for medical conditions, including pain. For example, in many cultures, women believe that their suffering is part of their role in society. Additionally treatment by a male healthcare provider may also bring shame to a woman's family, forcing her to go without treatment. Women may also encounter situations where physicians do not believe their pain is real.

"In order to promote change around the world, we need to raise awareness of pain disorders predominantly affecting women, increase research into these conditions and effective treatment options, as well as improve access to needed therapies," said Beverly Collett, MBBS, FRCA, IASP Council member and Consultant in Pain Medicine at Leicester Royal Infirmary, UK.

IASP would like to recognize Pfizer Inc as a sponsor of the Global Year Against Pain in Women and thank them for supporting efforts to promote education on this important issue.

For more information on *The Global Year Against Pain in Women*, upcoming initiatives around the world, please visit www.iasp-pain.org.

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About IASP

The International Association for the Study of Pain® (IASP) is the leading professional forum for science, practice, and education in the field of pain. IASP has more than 6,900 members in 106 countries, 69 national Chapters, and 14 Special Interest Groups (SIGs). IASP was founded in 1973 and is governed by an international Council, made up of Officers and Councilors elected by the members of the association.

IASP sponsors research symposia on specific pain-related topics and provides grants, awards and fellowships to support international pain research. Through its Developing Countries Project, IASP offers grants to improve pain education for clinicians in developing countries. Each year IASP launches the Global Day and Global Year Against Pain to raise awareness of different aspects of pain. The headquarters office of IASP is in Seattle, Washington, USA.

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