



National Tremor Foundation

## EAASM membership grows!

We are delighted to announce that the UK's National Tremor Foundation has become a member of the European Alliance for Access to Safe Medicines (EAASM). The Foundation aims to offer support and advice to all tremor sufferers, irrespective of age or tremor type. The Foundation has been impressed by the EAASM communications reaching current patient association members and was keen to sign up as a member. An article on recent EAASM activities will feature in the Foundation's forthcoming newsletter.

## A powerful voice for patient safety

Since its inception in 2007, the EAASM has been proud to be the leading patient-oriented, multi-sectoral group actively working to protect the European public from the growing threat of counterfeit medicines. We are a voice for patient safety, communicating the concerns of our members to the European public and the stakeholders able to effect change. Ensuring that our messages and actions continue to represent the views and concerns of the organisations we represent is at the heart of everything we do. Through continued collaboration with all of our members and supporters, your input will then be reflected in our actions, fortifying our position as patient safety champions. We are keen to hear from all of you about your organisation's individual views on fake medicines and how the EAASM can work to tackle this growing epidemic.



**“ In its incredibly short (2-year) history, what the EAASM has achieved is staggering. It has effectively gate-crashed an invitation-only party and put the concerns of patients firmly on the fake medicines agenda. As an inclusive group of concerned organisations, companies and individuals, we have worked together to change the landscape – politically and socially – of what is surely the biggest single threat to global patient safety. We'll continue to do that. We'll continue to put the patient firmly at the centre of this issue. Our lifeblood is patient safety and our heart beats strongest when fuelled by the ambitions, hopes and aspirations of the patient groups that support us. Your thoughts and ideas are behind every project we undertake, so please keep letting us know what your members think about counterfeit medicines and how they (through you) think we should be combatting this global healthcare crime against patients.”** *Jim Thomson, EAASM Chair*



Looking ahead, one of our main aims is to maximise two-way dialogue with all the organisations we represent, especially the 14 patient associations. It is our hope that by ensuring that we continue to speak for our members, the EAASM can continue to focus on the chief objectives of raising awareness and voicing concern on behalf of European patients. To achieve this goal, we ask all of you to continue taking an active role in EAASM activities – we always appreciate hearing your thoughts and opinions on our activities and how you see the EAASM working for you and your organisations. We thank you for your commitment to date and look forward to increasing our work together.

In the remainder of 2009 and beyond, we have many exciting EAASM activities lined up and we hope that through our collaboration with all of you, these activities will really drive home our patient safety objectives. Following an expert meeting in Brussels in July this year, we are actively working on the next EAASM report, which will focus on patient safety issues, in response to the European Commission's (EC) and European Parliament's (EP) activities on the legislation proposed in the Pharmaceutical Package.\*

It is the feeling of the EAASM Board – and we would ask you all for your thoughts on this point – that the issue of the dangers presented by the internet is of such importance that it deserves to be addressed by a separate European legislation. We feel that this issue should be provided with more attention than being just a footnote in the Pharmaceutical Package. Therefore, we would encourage you all to get involved in future projects, which following in the wake of the hugely successful *Counterfeiting Superhighway Report*, will focus stakeholder attention on the growing epidemic of illegal online 'pharmacies'.



**“ As a GP and on behalf of the European Men's Health Forum, I am particularly concerned about patients using the internet to self medicate. There are two reasons for this – the first is the general health danger presented when patients are removed from the medical system, and the second is the increased possibility of receiving counterfeit medicines, as evidenced by research carried out by the EAASM. I would urge all patient associations to join the EAASM and the fight for patient safety across Europe.”** *Dr Ian Banks, President, European Men's Health Forum, EAASM Board member*



As was touched on in the *Counterfeiting Superhighway*, we want to bring to the fore the worrying patient safety issues presented by purchasing medicines online, above and beyond the criminal supply of fake or substandard, potentially life threatening 'medicines'. These are issues which can affect every one of us and which we hear are a growing worry for many of our members. We have heard that of major concern is the fact that when people reach out to the internet for medicines, they are essentially bypassing the legitimate medical system and could be seriously endangering their health. Seeking diagnosis and medication online deprives the patient of expert advice on any underlying conditions. For example, life threatening diabetes, hypertension and lipid disorders could go untreated in people too uncomfortable to see their doctor about embarrassing conditions. These are precisely the issues and concerns that we want to hear about from *you*. We hope to shape these issues into hard-hitting campaigns and we want to work collaboratively with you all over the next year to maximise on the current political concern over fake medicines, in order to drive action for patient safety.



\*The Pharmaceutical Package is a package of proposed legislative changes raised by the EC and currently with the EP for assessment and implementation.