Creating a network of centres of reference and fostering research to improve the prognosis of sarcoma

- *Soft Tissue Sarcoma: Evidence and Experience*, organised by PharmaMar, will bring together leading international experts in soft tissue sarcoma to analyse the latest advances in its treatment

Madrid, 11 March 2016 - The creation of a network of centres of reference and adopting measures that promote research and access to treatments are two key aspects for improving the prognosis of patients with soft tissue sarcoma (STS), an uncommon type of cancer that originates in the tissues that connect, support and surround other body structures, such as muscles, fat, blood vessels, nerves, tendons and lining of the joints.

This is one of the conclusions of the renowned international oncologists during the presentation of the *Soft Tissue Sarcoma: Evidence and Experience* seminar. This meeting, organised by PharmaMar, will bring leading world experts in this disease to Barcelona on 11 and 12 March from, among other countries, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Germany, Spain and the United States, to analyse the latest advances in its diagnosis and treatment.

"*We are proud to lead this meeting, where the most influential oncologists in the world in sarcoma management share opinions, present new case reports, discuss the latest advances and the most effective treatments for these patients",* explained **Mr Luis Mora**, General Manager of the PharmaMar Oncology Unit.

Incidence of sarcoma

According to figures quoted by **Prof Jean-Yves Blay**, Chair of the European Organisation for the Research and Treatment of Cancer (EORTC), STS represents less than 1% of adult cancersi. "*There are more than 50 histological subtypes of soft tissue sarcoma. The most common are leiomyosarcoma and liposarcoma. In Europe, the incidence of this type of tumour in adults (not including gastrointestinal stromal tumour) is from 4 to 5 cases per 100,000 inhabitantsii and approximately*

half of the patients diagnosed with soft tissue sarcoma have developed metastases or are expected to do so", said Prof Blay.

To prevent patients reaching the expert sarcoma team after having been operated on, measures are required to guarantee an appropriate diagnosis and treatment agreed upon by a multidisciplinary team. **Dr Javier Martín Broto**, Chair of the Spanish Sarcoma Research Group (GEIS), maintains that this coordination requires the creation of a network of centres of reference to guarantee that patients with suspected soft tissue sarcoma are diagnosed and treated by teams of experts in the disease. *"Studies show that patients who are diagnosed and treated in a centre of reference specialising in soft tissue sarcoma survive for longer than those diagnosed and treated in a centre without such specialisation"*, he explained.

This is precisely one of the lines of research of the Spanish Sarcoma Research Group which, according to Dr Martin Broto, has been collaborating for years with the Ministry of Health for the recognition of sarcoma hospitals and CSUR (Centres, Services and Units of Reference) teams. In his opinion, *"we are currently in the final phase and we expect these centres to be made official in the near future"*.

The Spanish Sarcoma Research Group was created in 1994 and has led 47 research projects that have included thousands of patients. In the last few years, it has sponsored a large number of international clinical trials and its protocols are used worldwide.

Advances in the treatment of soft tissue sarcoma

Professor George Demetri, Director of the Centre for Sarcoma and Bone Oncology at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute (Boston), presented the latest research projects related to the treatment of sarcoma, including the study conducted with trabectedin (Yondelis®) in the United States, in which the compound was shown to reduce the risk of disease progression versus conventional treatment. Yondelis® is developed and marketed by PharmaMar in Europe, while Janssen Products, L.P. has the rights to develop and sell Yondelis® in the rest of the world except Japan, where PharmaMar has signed a licensing agreement with Taiho Pharmaceutical.

"Since Yondelis® was first approved in Europe in 2007, approximately 50,000 patients in 80 countries have benefited from this therapy in all its indications", said Prof. Demetri, who explained that *"advanced soft tissue sarcoma is a complex set of uncommon diseases that are virtually always life-threatening for patients with advanced stage disease. Patients need new treatment options that are more effective and well tolerated, and renewed hope has come with new drug approvals in the past decade based on sophisticated scientific research".*

According to the data provided by this expert, the Phase 3 multicentre trial in the United States, Brazil and Australia is one of the largest conducted to date in sarcoma patients. This study showed a significant improvement in disease control (called "progression-free survival") with trabectedin versus dacarbazine in patients with advanced liposarcoma (LPS) or leiomyosarcoma (LMS) after failure of prior standard therapy with an anthracycline and at least one other chemotherapy.

All the experts present highlighted the importance of these advances in the treatment of sarcoma, a rapidly progressing form of cancer that requires new treatment options. *"In soft tissue sarcoma, disease stabilisation is useful for evaluating the success of the treatment in advanced stage patients. The data from the latest clinical trials with Yondelis® offer a more hopeful future for patients and a path forward for even more research to improve clinical outcomes"*, concluded Dr Demetri.

About PharmaMar

Headquartered in Madrid, PharmaMar is a world-leading biopharmaceutical company in the discovery and development of innovative marine-derived anticancer drugs. The company has an important pipeline of drug candidates and a robust R&D oncology program. PharmaMar develops and commercializes YONDELIS® in Europe and has other three clinical-stage programs under development for several types of solid and hematological cancers, PM1183, plitidepsin, and PM184. PharmaMar is a global biopharmaceutical company with subsidiaries in Germany, Italy, France, Switzerland, United Kingdom, Belgium and the United States. PharmaMar fully owns other companies: GENOMICA, Spain's leading molecular diagnostics company; Sylentis, dedicated to researching therapeutic applications of gene silencing (RNAi); and two other chemical enterprises, Zelnova Zeltia and Xylazel. To learn more about PharmaMar, please visit us at www.pharmamar.com.

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i M. Leahy, et al. Chemotherapy treatment patterns and clinical outcomes in patients with metastatic soft tissue sarcoma. The SArcoma treatment and Burden of Illness in North America and Europe (SABINE) study. Ann Oncol published 6 April 2012, 10.1093/anno.

ii The ESMO/European Sarcoma Network Working Group. Soft tissue and visceral sarcomas: ESMO Clinical Practice Guidelines for diagnosis, treatment and follow-up. Annals of Oncology 25 (Supplement 3): iii102–iii112, 2014.