Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation Announces Five New Grants to Advance Cancer Nursing Skills in Central and Eastern Europe

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Bridging Cancer Care™ symposium at International Conference on Cancer Nursing in Prague focuses on breaking down barriers and elevating clinical practice for oncology nurses

NEW YORK--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Recognizing the increasingly important role nurses play in improving health outcomes for cancer patients, the Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation today announced five new two-year grants totaling nearly $750,000 to help improve nursing skills for oncology, general practice and public health nurses in the Czech Republic, Poland, Romania and Russia.

While cancer is the second-most common cause of death in Europe, mortality rates for most cancer types are higher in Central and Eastern Europe than in Western Europe, according to European Union data (Eurostat 2011). Low levels of cancer awareness and understanding among the general population, a lack of cancer prevention and screening efforts, and limited health care resources in the region are factors contributing to this gap.

Over the past five years, the Foundation’s Bridging Cancer Care™ initiative has been working with more than two dozen organizations in Central and Eastern Europe to reduce the burden of cancer by addressing a variety of patient needs, including psychosocial support, disease education, palliative care, care coordination and building nursing capacity.

“Nurses are in a unique position to enhance patient care, influence treatment outcomes and improve the quality of life for cancer patients and their families or caregivers,” said John Damonti, president, Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation. “By building trusting relationships with patients, other health care providers and supportive services in the community, nurses can help ensure cancer patients receive the comprehensive and compassionate care they need and deserve.”

A hallmark of the Foundation's efforts to elevate the practice of oncology nursing is the annual Bridging Cancer Care™ Grantee Summit, which this year coincides with the International Conference on Cancer Nursing (ICCN) in Prague, Czech Republic. Foundation grantees and partners from Europe and the United States gathered before ICCN to share best practices and participate in educational sessions led by global health experts and cancer advocates from the World Health Organization, the International Society of Nurses in Cancer Care (ISNCC), European Oncology Nursing Society, National Cancer Institute of Brazil and other organizations around the globe. ISNCC is a co-sponsor of the Bridging Cancer Care™ Grantee Summit.

Bridging Cancer Care™ also hosted a symposium at the ICCN conference titled “New Models for Elevating the Practice and Status of Community-Based Nursing Across the Spectrum of Cancer Care in Central and Eastern Europe.” The symposium highlighted innovative projects that are breaking barriers and involving nurses in all aspects of care along cancer continuum from health promotion and prevention, screening, early detection and survivorship to palliative and hospice care.

During a joint press event today with ISNCC at the ICCN conference, the Foundation announced that the following five organizations will receive Bridging Cancer Care™ grants:

- **Triedinstvo** will receive US $143,953 to establish health centers in Severodvinsk, Russia, where nurses will educate patients about living with cancer and teach the families of cancer patients about how to care for their loved ones after the active course of treatment. The nurses also will provide training on cancer screening, prevention and care for general practice nurses who work in hospitals and clinics, and coordinate patient support groups and promote cancer screening and education in the community.

- **Hospices of Hope** will receive US $150,002 to pilot and develop a “key specialist nurse” program in Bucharest to ensure children and young adults with advanced cancers receive coordinated holistic care that includes psychosocial, spiritual and social support. The specialist nurses, who will have oncology or palliative care experience and be supported by a part-time pediatrician, will help ensure the medical and psychosocial needs of young cancer patients and their families are addressed and comprehensive care plans are established and followed.

- **Russian Nurses Association** (RNA) will receive US $149,946 to improve the safety and quality of care for cancer
patients undergoing chemotherapy in multiple care settings across Russia. RNA will develop an oncology nursing curriculum with the Oncology Nursing Society of the United States, educate 60 oncology nurse trainers who will in turn train 1,200 nurses from regional hospitals and ambulatory home care settings, and establish quality improvement projects to evaluate nursing practices and sustain the improvement of nursing interventions on patient outcomes.

- **Hospice Casa Sperantei** will receive US $149,440 to increase access to quality palliative care services for underserved cancer patients in rural areas of Romania. A national study conducted in 2007 found that family members or relatives caring for people with advanced cancers often do not receive the specialized support they need. This project will focus on increasing palliative care awareness, knowledge and skills among nurses and other care providers and empowering current nursing tutors, service developers and others to be advocates for palliative care nursing.

- **ISNCC** will receive US $150,000 to pilot and determine the feasibility of using the “Eastern Europe Helping Smokers Quit” e-learning program and toolkit to train nurses in Czech Republic and Poland to more effectively assist and support adults who want to stop smoking.

**About the Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation**

The mission of the Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation is to help reduce health disparities by strengthening community-based health care worker capacity, integrating medical care and community-based supportive services, and mobilizing communities in the fight against disease.

For more information on the Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation, visit [www.bms.com/Foundation](http://www.bms.com/Foundation).

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