

The 8th Baltic Conference of Haematology that started today in Tallinn is this time taking a wide-based approach to haematology. 118 delegates and lecturers from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and 29 other foreign countries, incl. Finland, Sweden, England, the Netherlands and Russia, are present. The conference will last until Saturday.

"The everyday work of the delegates of today's conference is to give us the hope we need to fight the most horrible diagnosis – as the development of research and work done by brilliant doctors will result in more and more victories that bring joy and perhaps even some peace into our hearts," told Evelin Ilves who opened the conference. "The treatment of hematological diseases has made considerable progress over the past decade. Today, most children suffering from acute leukemia are cured. What is most important is that even the most aggravating prognosis is today no longer completely without hope – fatal diseases have become chronic. The Estonians' initiative to organise a conference that brings together all the haematologists of the Baltic states has brought all these good ideas closer to us, allowing us to implement these ideas, which is why I am acknowledging the ambitions of Estonian haematologists and the work they all do to enhance the quality of life of our society."

"A conference on its own will not eradicate any disease, but it offers a good opportunity for us to determine the current situation," told Professor Hele Everaus. "The conference that started today is focusing on the latest developments that have taken place in the treatment of tumours. Major breakthroughs can be seen in this sphere today, though unfortunately there are still many problems that we have not been able to solve even with highly developed gene studies – tumour diseases are individual in every patient, regardless of the apparent similarity of cells that cause tumours."

"Haematological diseases are not very frequent or common; therefore, extensive international co-operation is needed to improve treatment results," told the Head of the Mustamäe Centre of Haematology of the North Estonia Medical Centre and the President of the Estonian Society of Haematology, one of the organisers of the conference, Dr. Edward Laane. "The purpose of the Baltic Conference of Haematology is especially to develop co-operation at regional level. Apart from traditional tumour diseases, we focus on bleeding diseases: haemophilia and thrombophilia and the training of haematologists. A separate session on the central registration of medicinal products in Europe is held in co-operation with the Estonian Society of Haematology and the State Agency of Medicines."

"We involve top specialists who bring specific knowledge from countries with larger population

numbers; from countries characterised by a higher frequency and detection of diseases, therefore allowing them to share experiences that we might not have," Edward Laane explained. "As the prospects of patients have considerably increased in many cases, such as in the case of myeloma, we need to enhance awareness of the diseases and alternative treatment."

"The session of patients is a new aspect; I got the idea for such a session last November as I paid a visit to the Dana Farber Cancer Centre in Boston," told Edward Laane. "My host was Professor Steven Treon, the number 1 expert in the world in the field of Waldenström's macroglobulinemia. One of the European leaders in the sphere of Waldenström's macroglobulinemia is Dr. Eva Kimby from Karolinska; she will give her presentation at the main panel. Professor Nikhil Munshi from Harvard will give a presentation to patients with myeloma. I will have a session with patients with Waldenström's macroglobulinemia. The selection of lecturers is quite impressive and I can see the promise of many interesting presentations that we all might benefit from in the nearest future. The patients' day on Saturday is solely dedicated to myeloma and macroglobulinemia."

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Background information:

Myeloma is a malignant tumour, characterised by proliferation of plasma cells in bone marrow or other tissues of the human body. Cancerous plasma cells will produce monoclonal immunoglobulin that is present in the blood or urine. Myeloma is a disease of the elderly, only rarely incurring before the age of 40. The average age upon diagnosis is 69 years. Myeloma

develops in 3–4 per 100,000 people per year; however, incidence of the disease increases rapidly among people over 70 – developing in 30-40 per 100,000 people per year. It is more common in men than in women, the respective ratio being 3:2. Myeloma is linked to radioactive radiance and toxic substances. Myeloma is generally thought to be treatable but is incurable.

Waldenström's macroglobulinemia

is a rare lymphoid tumour that develops slowly and produces immunoglobulin M. The average age of patients diagnosed with this disease is 65 years and it develops in 2-3 per 1 million people per year. There is no cure for this disease.

Baltic Conference of Haematology has been taking place since 1998, initiated by the Estonian Society of Haematology. **The Estonian Society of Haematology** has

been operating in Estonia over 10 years and unites all the haematologists of Estonia – the association has 30 members. The goal of the Society is to promote the knowledge, co-ordination of research work and development of inter-disciplinary co-operation. The Society organises speciality-related events, co-ordinates the development of appropriate standards of treatment, compiles and publishes collections of research materials and literature and methodological guidelines to pursue its goals.

Haematology-Oncology Clinic of Tartu University Hospital is the centre for diagnosis and treatment of hematological and oncological diseases, as well as for study and research in Estonia. Its mission is to offer high quality, effective and patient-friendly diagnosis and treatment to patients suffering from hematological and oncological diseases, thereby developing the Estonian public's and physician's knowledge of these diseases including essence, means of prevention, diagnose and treatment. The main activities of the clinic involve high level ambulatory and stationary medical care in the specialties of haematology and oncology; the clinic is also the base for educational and research for the Medical Faculty of the University of Tartu in the given spheres.

Oncology and Haematology Clinic of North Estonia Medical Centre is one of the largest specialist cancer centres in Estonia, providing services to approximately 2/3 of the Estonian population. Since 1 January 2003, the North Estonia Medical Centre has been housing a Haematology Department, reconstructed according to a special project. The Haematology Centre, which developed from the Haematology Department and has been operating since 2010, is one of three structural units of the Oncology and Haematology Clinic.