



PRESS RELEASE

Paris, 11 June 2008

EMBARGO: 00.01 (CET)

'B Me' Unveils Novel Design Concepts Reflecting the Needs of Individuals with Rheumatoid Arthritis

International initiative highlights the significant impact rheumatoid arthritis has on a person's ability to lead a normal life.

Basel, Switzerland — A unique condom packet. A fashionable wrist splint. Clothing with innovative fasteners. These are just a few examples of design concepts unveiled today as part of the '**B Me**' initiative, on display at the annual European League Against Rheumatism (EULAR) congress in Paris.

'**B Me**' is an international awareness initiative that puts the spotlight on rheumatoid arthritis by using design concepts to challenge the way people think about living with this condition.

"The process of getting people who have rheumatoid arthritis together with designers is a fantastic opportunity," says Robert Johnstone, President of Arthritis and Rheumatism International. "It creates designs that help integrate people back into mainstream society, rather than simply addressing a medical problem."

'**B Me**' was developed with input and collaboration from people with rheumatoid arthritis, advocacy group representatives, physicians and design institutions. The initiative facilitated the creation of several "inclusive" design concepts addressing some of the everyday tasks and activities that people with rheumatoid arthritis find challenging. "Inclusive" design focuses on designing solutions that appeal to everyone, not just those who have debilitating conditions like rheumatoid arthritis.

Novel designs that have been created within the '**B Me**' initiative include:

- Easy-to-open condom packet – the packet is large enough to grip in one hand while pulling an opening loop with the other, requiring less force and dexterity to open
- Fashionable wrist splint – modeled on current medical support aids but designed with modern styling to promote wearability and integration with individual style choices



- Clothing with innovative fasteners – inspired by the discomfort and frustration people with rheumatoid arthritis experience when dressing or undressing, this concept uses grip technology to make dressing easier, for example when securing cuff links or doing up shoes

Rheumatoid arthritis is one of the most common autoimmune diseases, affecting more than 20 million people worldwide¹, with as many as three million in Europe alone². It is a progressive chronic disease, characterised by inflammation of the membrane lining the joints, which ultimately leads to irreversible joint destruction and disability. Sadly after ten years, less than 50% of people with rheumatoid arthritis can continue to work or function normally on a daily basis³.

“People with rheumatoid arthritis tell me that undertaking usual activities of daily living such as fastening buttons, getting in and out of chairs and working in the kitchen is incredibly difficult,” says Dr Andrew Östör, Consultant Rheumatologist and Director of the Rheumatology Clinical Research Unit at Addenbrooke's Hospital in Cambridge, UK. “Treatment for rheumatoid arthritis has progressed rapidly over the last few years. Innovative biologics targeting specific molecules and cells are now available for those who don't respond to conventional treatment. Using design to raise awareness about the disease, while successfully managing the condition through innovative medical treatment, moves toward the goal of independent living for people with rheumatoid arthritis.”

– ENDS –

Editor's Notes

About 'B Me'

'B Me' is funded by Roche, as part of its long-term commitment to raise awareness of rheumatoid arthritis and help people with the condition live as independently as possible.

For further information, please visit www.bmeinitiative.com/

About Roche

Headquartered in Basel, Switzerland, Roche is one of the world's leading research-focused healthcare groups in the fields of pharmaceuticals and diagnostics. As a supplier of innovative products and services for the early detection, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of disease, the Group contributes on a broad range of fronts to improving people's health and quality of life. Additional information is available on the Internet at www.roche.com.



For more information, please contact:

Cohn & Wolfe
Rebecca Hibble
Direct: + 44 (0)20 7331 5318
Mobile: + 44 (0)7813 096 161
rebecca_hibble@uk.cohnwolfe.com

Barbara Grogan
Direct: + 44 (0)20 7331 5371
Mobile: + 44 (0)7534 088 337
barbara_grogan@uk.cohnwolfe.com

Roche
Federico Maiardi
Direct: + 41 (0)61 688 7946
Mobile: + 41 (0)79 264 3978
federico.maiardi@roche.com

¹ Arthritis Support - based on U.S. Census Bureau data, World Health Organization statistics and epidemiology studies
(<http://www.arthritisupport.com/library/showarticle.cfm/ID/879/T/Arthritis/cat/traditional/> last accessed 3rd June)

² Jönsson B, Kobelt G, Smolen J (Guest Editors). The Burden of Rheumatoid Arthritis and Patient Access to Treatment. *The European Journal of Health Economics*. 2008. Vol. 8, Suppl. 2 / January 2008

³ Weinblatt ME. Rheumatoid arthritis: treat now, not later [editorial]. *Ann Intern Med*. 1996;124:773-774