****PRESS RELEASE****

Full-service Healthcare Distributors' Conference Addresses Future of Healthcare Supply Chains and Resilience Building Measures

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MADRID - Healthcare experts, thought leaders, and innovators from across the globe are gathered in Madrid, Spain for the 8th edition of the GIRP Supply Chain Conference. The 2-day conference, which began yesterday, brings together stakeholders from across the healthcare sector to discuss the latest trends and challenges in the healthcare supply chain.

Over the course of the conference, delegates heard from a diverse range of speakers, including full-service healthcare distributors, healthcare providers, policymakers and G(M)DP inspectors, and experts from the European Commission and European Medicines Agency, to discuss a wide range of topics, including the impact of technology on the supply chain, managing shortages of medicines, specialty medicines, and the importance of collaboration and partnership.

Conference participants are using the opportunity to exchange on the importance of building strong relationships with healthcare stakeholders across the industry, from healthcare providers to policymakers and National Competent Authorities to patients themselves. They are also exploring innovative solutions to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the healthcare supply chain, including the use of digital tools.

A key discussion focussed on the future of healthcare supply chains, reflecting on the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and other challenges the hector sector has faced over the past three years in order to identify sustainable measures to build greater resilience into supply chains. The session featured Ms Monika Derecque-Pois, GIRP Director General, Ms María Jesús Lamas Díaz, Executive Director of the Spanish Agency of Medicines and Medical Products (AEMPS), Mr Rui Santos Ivo, President of the Portuguese National Authority of Medicines and Health Products (INFARMED), and Prof Dr Christa Wirthumer-Hoche, Head of the Austrian Agency for Health and Food Safety (AGES).

Ms Lamas Díaz reflected on the main vulnerabilities of supply chain at both EU and national level, including need for better transparency in the supply chain and shortages as well as necessity of better relations between supply chain stakeholders and public authorities. Healthcare distributors are in a good position to be part of the solution and the agency welcomes their commitment and ability to provided early warnings for potential shortages: On the latter, she shared the Agencies' latest initiative to strengthen collaboration with full-service healthcare distributions in Spain with Fedifar: the ARTEMIS project, a platform of exchange to build knowledge on full-service healthcare distributors' supply and anticipate shortages. Other ongoing to ensure security of medicinal products supply in Spain include the early detection of shortages, through notifications from full-service healthcare distributors.

Prof Dr Wirthumer-Hoche, member of the Medicines Shortages Steering Group" (MSSG), stressed the need for an open dialogue on medicines stockpiling to explore the possible establishment of an official list of products/active substances to be mandatory stored, understand which stakeholders would be concern and outline all relevant logistics including costs, storage and duration. Mr Santos Ivo emphasized the need for stronger, earlier coordination among patients, health systems, and healthcare supply chain stakeholders as well as between across agencies including regulation & health technology assessments.

The session was a valuable opportunity for industry leaders to come together and share their insights and experiences, and to work towards building more resilient and sustainable healthcare supply chains.

For more information please contact:
Martin FitzGerald, Deputy Director General, GIRP (m.fitzgerald@girp.eu) - +32 2 777 99 77

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Rue de la Loi 26, Box 14
1040 Brussels, Belgium
T +32 (0)2 777 99 77
F +32 (0)2 770 36 01
E girp@girp.eu
W www.girp.eu

European Healthcare Distribution Association (GIRP) (website)
GIRP, the European Healthcare Distribution Association, is the umbrella organisation for full-service healthcare distributors in Europe. It represents the national associations of over 750 pharmaceutical wholesalers serving 34 European countries, as well as major international and pan-European healthcare distribution companies. GIRP members employ over 140,000 people and distribute around 15 billion packs of medicines as well as a wide range of healthcare products per year. As the vital link in healthcare, they are committed to developing and providing innovative and efficient healthcare products and services to improve health and wellbeing of patients across Europe.

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