

Confederation of Meningitis Organizations Launches Web Site

-- COMOonline.org Offers Global Information, Resources --

Gloucestershire, United Kingdom, February 22, 2006 – The Confederation of Meningitis Organizations (COMO), a network of meningitis and children’s health organizations throughout the world, today announced the launch of its Web site, *www.COMOonline.org*. The site provides information on COMO and its local member groups and support services, as well as resources for those interested in founding their own local organizations to fight against meningitis.

“The Confederation of Meningitis Organizations was founded for the sharing of best practices, information and research across borders,” said Philip Kirby, Chief Executive of the Meningitis Trust and President of COMO. “The launch of our Web site will not only strengthen our existing COMO network, but expand and inspire additional efforts to combat meningitis both locally and globally.”

COMOonline.org features a snapshot of the “Establishing a Meningitis Organisation Tool Kit,” a product of the COMO member organizations’ shared experiences that will help facilitate the establishment of new organizations to help raise the global profile of meningitis. The complete Tool Kit provides case studies illustrating how different local organizations have been developed and poses important questions to consider when establishing a local group. The Web site also consists of: COMO member organization profiles; information on upcoming events, activities and programmes; and personal stories from people around the world who have been impacted by meningitis.

Established organizations or individuals who are committed to the elimination of meningitis and/or provide support to those affected by the disease are encouraged to apply for COMO membership through the site and request access to the complete Tool

Kit, which is available in English, Spanish, French, Italian, Portuguese, German and Mandarin.

COMO was established at the first World Conference of Meningitis Organizations (WCMO) in September 2004 and currently is comprised of 14 organizations from 13 countries around the world. For more information, visit www.COMOonline.org.

Initial support for the COMO Web has been provided by Wyeth Pharmaceuticals.

Note to Editors:

COMO

The Confederation of Meningitis Organizations' mission is to assist member organizations to be sustainable, identifiable and influential sources for information and support services for those people affected by meningitis in their regions and united in their endeavors globally through their membership of COMO, which is committed to the elimination of meningitis and septicemia. The founding members include leaders from meningitis and children's health organizations from around the world, including Association Audrey (France), Foundation Illyria Velasco Carranza (Mexico), GAVI – PneumoADIP (USA), Meningitis Centre (Australia), Meningitis Foundation of America (USA), Meningitis Research Foundation of Canada (Canada), Meningitis Research Foundation (UK and Ireland), Meningitis Trust (Ireland), Meningitis Trust (New Zealand), Meningitis Trust (UK), MO.I.GE (Italy), Philippine Foundation for Vaccination (Philippines), Pneumo-Mening (Brazil) and Pneumo-Mening Centre (Taiwan).

Meningitis and septicemia

Meningitis can be caused by bacteria (e.g., *Haemophilus influenzae* type b, *Streptococcus pneumoniae* and *Neisseria meningitidis*), as well as viruses. Some bacteria that cause meningitis (inflammation of the lining of the brain) can also cause septicemia (blood poisoning). Many people who have a meningococcal or a pneumococcal infection have both meningitis and septicemia, although some have meningitis or septicemia alone.

The early symptoms of meningitis and septicaemia include fever, vomiting, headache, cold hands and feet, rapid breathing, drowsiness, and stomach, joint or muscle pain. These symptoms may not all appear at once and may be accompanied by other symptoms such as a stiff neck and dislike of bright lights.

Patients suffering from meningococcal septicaemia often develop a non-blanching rash, called a haemorrhagic rash. Septicaemia can develop quickly and in severe cases, the rash may spread as you watch it. It is important to realise that a rash may not always occur, especially with pneumococcal septicaemia.

Both septicaemia and meningitis have high fatality rates.

Bacterial meningitis can be treated with a number of effective antibiotics, although some bacteria are developing resistance to these antibiotics. There also are several effective vaccines available to help protect infants, young children and adults against some causes of meningitis, such as *S. pneumoniae*, *N. meningitidis* and *Haemophilus influenzae*.

For further information please contact:

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