NEW YORK (GBI Research), 22 May 2012 - The rapid growth of the elderly population worldwide is fuelling an escalation of age-related medical conditions such as cancer and arthritis, boosting the need for **opioids** and **pain management drugs**. However, needs are still not being met by the healthcare industry, according to a new report by medical intelligence experts GBI Research.

The new report* indicates that the pain therapy market is growing, despite patent expiries, generic substitutions and concerns over addiction. Pain is a widespread problem considerably affecting day to day life, with over 25% of the global population suffering from some form of clinically significant pain every year, creating a significant patient pool that pharmaceutical players are keen to cater to.

Despite this, pain suffered by cancer patient still goes under-treated in more than 50% of treatment cases, primarily due to the absence of an adequate pain management solution. A combination of unwanted side effects and the fear of addiction to certain classes of medications is preventing some individuals from relieving their discomfort.

As a result, pain management presents a considerable challenge for physicians, who are struggling to meet the growing unmet clinical needs of their patients. Rates of treatment-seeking patients and diagnosis are also low, as the current offerings from the pain management market push fewer patients through surgery doors.

The market for pain management therapeutics is comprised of therapies such as opioids, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), local anesthetics, tricyclic antidepressants and anticonvulsants. Opioids, which represent the largest pain therapy class, can cause side effects such as nausea, vomiting, constipation and drowsiness, and even severe respiratory depression. Opioids are also often viewed in a negative light for their addictive qualities. NSAIDs in turn can cause gastrointestinal upsets, increase cardiovascular risks, and cause kidney and liver damage.

However, the future may hold some hope for chronic pain sufferers. The unmet need for safer

and more efficient drugs has resulted in substantial R&D interest in treating pain conditions. The current R&D pipeline for pain management has 282 trials in different stages of discovery and development. Neuropathic pain, currently accounting for almost half of the total pain management therapeutics market, is the key therapy focus area in the current development pipeline. More than 50% of the total trials for pain management therapeutics are in Phase III and Phase II research, which indicates that some new drug candidates will emerge in the near future.

Current competition between chronic pain therapeutics is strong, as many treatment options for chronic pain are available, meaning that lower market potential is available for any new entrants without innovative “first-in-class” drugs or disease-modifying mechanisms of action that can show improved overall survival, safety and efficacy. Therefore, new drug delivery systems look to favor novel techniques such as intravenous infusions, time-release transdermal skin patches, nasal sprays and inhaled aerosols.

GBI Research estimates that the global pain management market was worth approximately $28.6 billion in 2010. Improved diagnosis of pain indications, coupled with blockbuster sales of Lyrica (pregabalin) and Cymbalta (duloxetine HCl), are expected to drive the pain therapeutics market in the future. While these two top-selling drugs are expected to face patent expiries in the forecast period, the healthy development pipeline for pain management reflects positive prospects for the growth of the market in the future.

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