



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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For Immediate Release

### **NEW HOPE IN THE INCREASING BATTLE AGAINST GLAUCOMA**

#### **Scientific meeting in Vienna hears of new potential use for Gamma Knife<sup>®</sup> surgery**

Delegates at the 12th Leksell Gamma Knife<sup>®</sup> Society meeting in Vienna were recently presented the results of a study which showed that Gamma Knife<sup>®</sup> surgery reduces the main complications of advanced glaucoma where conventional therapy fails. At the same time, Gamma Knife<sup>®</sup> surgery is non-invasive and therefore not traumatic for the patient with a fast rate of post-treatment recovery.

Glaucoma becomes much more common with increasing age. It is uncommon below the age of 40 but affects 1 percent of people over this age and 5 percent over age 65 and is one of the leading causes of blindness. Glaucoma is a chronic disease and must often be treated for life. As the average age of the global population increases, so the need for effective treatment options becomes more acute.

Glaucoma is a group of eye diseases that gradually steals sight with little warning and often without symptoms. Vision loss is caused by damage to the optic nerve. The eye needs a certain amount of fluid pressure to keep the eyeball in shape so that it can work properly (so called intraocular pressure – IOP). Although there are other causes of this optic nerve damage, the main problem is uncontrolled increase of intraocular pressure, resulting in irreversible damage.

According to the WHO, the number of persons estimated to be blind as a result of glaucoma is 6.7 million, accounting for more than 10 percent of all global blindness.

"Blindness represents a serious public health, social and economic problem for our Member States. It is especially true for the developing countries, where 9 out of 10 of the world's blind live," stated Dr Gro Harlem Brundtland, Director-General emeritus of WHO.

The study presented at the Leksell Gamma Knife<sup>®</sup> Society meeting in Vienna was jointly conducted by the neurosurgery department at Na Homolce Hospital and the Department of Ophthalmology, Charles University, Central Military Hospital, Prague in the Czech Republic.

"About 10 percent of patients with glaucoma suffer eventual irreversible blindness and despite the use of eye-drops, drugs, laser or cryotherapy and even incisional surgery the rate of treatment failure is still unacceptably high" says Dr. Jiri Pilbauer (Ophthalmologist and co-author of the study, together with I. Hejdukova, L. Nováček



and the neurosurgeons Professor V. Vladyka and Dr. Roman Liscak.) “We knew that a new more effective method of treatment had to be sought.”

“Leksell Gamma Knife® is a neurosurgical tool which we usually use to accurately deliver high single doses of radiation to well defined areas of the brain. The most common indications treated with Gamma Knife surgery are vascular malformations, benign tumors, metastases and other malignant tumors as well as functional disorders.” Adds Dr. Pilbauer. “We are most encouraged by the results we have achieved using Leksell Gamma Knife® to treat glaucoma; achieving significant reductions in intra-ocular pressure, elimination or reduction of pain directly or in a few weeks and halting the process of sight deterioration”.

In most cases no additional treatment with analgesic medication or betablockers is needed. In other words, for the majority of patients there is no need for life long medical treatment

A prospective 5-year clinical study to investigate the treatment of glaucoma in the early stages is now under way as the next step in research. Leksell Gamma Knife® procedure is performed on an out-patient basis with patient progress being followed up on a regular basis.

Leksell Gamma Knife® Society is a biannual scientific meeting for all Leksell Gamma Knife® users around the world. This year the meeting was held in Vienna, Austria with over 400 participating doctors and medical physicists and over 200 papers presented.

Leksell Gamma Knife® is manufactured by Elekta AB, a world-leading supplier of advanced and innovative radiation oncology and neurosurgery solutions and services for precise treatment of cancer and brain disorders. Elekta's solutions are clinically effective, cost efficient and gentle on the patient.

In the Unites States, treatment of glaucoma using Leksell Gamma Knife®, is not an indication specifically cleared by the Federal Drug Administration (FDA). The intended use of Leksell Gamma Knife® is stereotactic irradiation of intracranial structures.

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#### **Notes to editors**

For further information about the Leksell Gamma Knife Society, please visit:  
[http://www.elekta.com/contentinternational.nsf/va\\_LookupByWebTitle/leksell\\_gamma\\_knife\\_society](http://www.elekta.com/contentinternational.nsf/va_LookupByWebTitle/leksell_gamma_knife_society)

For further information regarding Leksell Gamma Knife® and other Elekta products, please visit: [www.elekta.com](http://www.elekta.com)



Images of Leksell Gamma Knife® can be accessed at the following website address:  
[http://www.elekta.com/contentinternational.nsf/va\\_LookupByWebTitle/photo\\_gallery\\_-\\_leksell\\_gamma\\_knife](http://www.elekta.com/contentinternational.nsf/va_LookupByWebTitle/photo_gallery_-_leksell_gamma_knife)

**References:**

National Eye Institute - ([http://www.nei.nih.gov/health/glaucoma/glaucoma\\_facts.htm](http://www.nei.nih.gov/health/glaucoma/glaucoma_facts.htm))  
Glaucoma Research Foundation – (<http://www.glaucoma.org/learn/facts.html>)  
Moorfields Eye Hospital, UK – (<http://www.moorfields.co.uk/EyeHealth/Glaucoma/Facts>)  
World Health Organization – ([http://www.who.int/health\\_topics/blindness/en/](http://www.who.int/health_topics/blindness/en/))

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