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**Uniquely devoted to the Canadian myeloma community**

## **Quebec Approves Velcade® As First-Line Treatment for Newly-diagnosed Blood Cancer Patients**

Montreal, QC, June 11, 2009

### ***Myeloma Canada, Patients and Professionals Applaud Quebec for its Leadership in Providing Patients with Improved Treatment Access***

Today, Quebec patients diagnosed with multiple myeloma, a severely painful and fatal form of blood cancer, are on their way to greater access to VELCADE® (bortezomib), the first novel agent used as a first-line treatment for the disease. The *Conseil du médicament* approved the addition of VELCADE on the *liste de médicaments établissements*, which will support Quebec hospitals to consider adding VELCADE to their formularies.

As a first-line therapy for patients who are not candidates for stem cell transplants, VELCADE is combined with the current standard of treatment – melphalan and prednisone (MP). (1) The combination of VELCADE and MP has demonstrated improved efficacy compared to current standard of treatment alone. (2) VELCADE received a Notice of Compliance from Health Canada in 2008 for first-line treatment of multiple myeloma (1) and is marketed by Ortho Biotech, a division of Janssen-Ortho Inc.

“Multiple myeloma continues to increase in prevalence in Canada. It is essential that patients have access to the most effective and safest combination treatment that provides them with the best opportunity for survival,” said John Lemieux, President, Myeloma Canada.

Monique Racine, a myeloma patient, knows firsthand the challenges of the disease. “New treatment combinations are extremely important to me as a myeloma patient as they allow me to maintain my health and quality of life. Greater access to VELCADE as a first-line treatment option will now offer newly-diagnosed patients in Quebec a new approach and renewed hope in fighting this tenacious disease.”

### **Addition of VELCADE Improves Overall Survival**

The decision of the *Conseil du médicament* was based on the findings of the “VELCADE as Initial Standard Therapy in Multiple Myeloma: Assessment with Melphalan and Prednisone” (VISTA) trial, which demonstrated that the addition of VELCADE to the current standard treatment significantly improved the time to progression of the disease, complete response to treatment and the treatment-free interval time. (2) The VISTA study results showed that the overall survival rate, at 24 months, for myeloma patients was

82.6 per cent for patients who received VELCADE along with MP combination treatment compared to only 69.5 per cent for those who received MP combination alone (1).

“I am hopeful that with today’s news I will be able to provide newly-diagnosed patients the most

appropriate treatment available. As an oncologist, I see too many patients when the cancer is at its most serious and advanced stage and who could have benefited from VELCADE as first-line treatment," says Dr. Richard LeBlanc Hematologist, Maisonneuve-Rosemont Hospital in Montreal. "VELCADE is not only efficient, but also demonstrates a strong safety profile compared to other myeloma treatment options."

VELCADE is currently funded across Canada for the treatment of relapsed or refractory multiple myeloma. Ortho Biotech will continue to seek access and funding across Canada for this new indication of front-line treatment of newly diagnosed, previously untreated multiple myeloma patients.