



9th Workshop
Eurordis Round Table of Companies

*“Significant Benefit of Orphan Drugs:
Impact on Clinical Development and Assessment”*

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*Les Salons de l’Aéro-Club de France
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Concept Paper

Since the publication of the **European Regulation (EC) 141/2000** that states in article 3(1)(b) that *“A medicinal product shall be designated as an orphan medicinal product if its sponsor can establish... that there exists no satisfactory method of diagnosis, prevention or treatment of the condition in question that has been authorised in the Community or, if such method exists, that the medicinal product will be of significant benefit to those affected by the condition”*, quite a number of documents have been published and long discussions have been held debating **the meaning of the term “significant” in a legal and scientific context.**

The broad variability of the different drugs and therapeutic indications contribute to the lack of a clear definition of the term “significant benefit”, which leads the various stakeholders, i.e. regulators, sponsors, national competent authorities, physicians and patients, to have their own personal understanding of the elements required to fit this criterion.

Thus, there is clearly a growing **need for a thorough public communication on the evaluation of the criterion of significant benefit** of each new designated or authorised orphan drug.

Today, a number of orphan medicinal products exist on the market for the same or for very similar indications, however **neither the health professionals nor the patients fully understand what**

the real differences are between these co-existing products and in which cases one should be preferred to the others.

Similarly, **national authorities** also have the impression that they have to register products for a similar or identical indication, however with each claiming its own market exclusivity.

The **sponsors** also have the impression that the market exclusivity of their products is infringed on under unclear clinical/medical bases that would be worth explaining further.

Today, 8 years after the implementation of the orphan drug Regulation, the Committee for Orphan Medicinal Products (COMP) and the EU Commission have clearer and more concrete indications on how the significant benefit criterion shall be used.

On the basis of the **dual experience of the evaluation of significant benefit at the time of the designation and at marketing authorisation**, the COMP has evolved in its reflection and practices and this year, it revises the “*Guidelines on the Elements Required to Support the Medical Plausibility and the Assumption of Significant Benefit for an Orphan Designation*”.

The **9th workshop of the Eurordis Round Table of Companies** takes this opportunity to offer all its participants –industry representatives, rare disease patients and regulators – the chance to openly and informally discuss their own understanding of the term “significant benefit” in the light of today’s experience.

The **morning session**, will be mainly dedicated to the presentation of the regulatory aspects, including the case of similar products and experience of the **Scientific Advice Working Party (SAWP)**. In the context of their advisory role for the improvement of drug development, the members of this party are called to include the fulfilment of the significant benefit criterion among the objectives of the development plan that the SAWP suggests to the sponsors of orphan medicinal products. Industry expects more guidance from the SAWP on the demonstration of significant benefit.

The significant benefit is, in fact, an additional criterion to the CHMP classical requirements of quality, safety and efficacy while being, at the same time, in close relationship with them.

Furthermore, in the regulatory context at the EU level, the increasing role of patients in the evaluation of significant benefit will be discussed. The benefit expected from any newly authorised orphan drug should, in the end, be experienced by those affected by the medical condition, the patients concerned. This is why they should be consulted more about the relevance and significance of the benefit claimed for a new orphan drug.

Part of the workshop’s **afternoon session** will be dedicated to evaluating the **experiences of the pharmaceutical industry and clinicians with the significant benefit of the medicines** they produce and use, respectively. In particular, the **situation in the oncology field** will be presented. Prior to the final discussion, the audience will be invited to reflect on how to

communicate significant benefit to the different stakeholders. In particular, how this unique criterion applied to orphan drugs could be used by the National Competent Authorities at the time these medicinal products enter the national registration process.

We expect that this one-day meeting will provide all stakeholders with a new common ground for a real consensus on the interpretation of this criterion and toward better practices. It will also pave the way toward the better use of the valuable information linked to significant benefit at the time of the national assessment of orphan drugs, thus at the time when the conditions for patients' access to orphan drugs are defined.