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Global survey reveals women living with cancer feel stigmatized and unsupported highlighting unmet need for increased education and support services

- **Results of the survey show there is a need for greater collaboration between governments, healthcare professionals, employers and third parties to support women living with cancer**
- **Core areas have been identified where there is a need for discussion, assessment and action**

Darmstadt, Germany, September 24, 2019 – Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, a leading science and technology company, which operates its biopharmaceutical business as EMD Serono in the US and Canada, today released the [Supporting Women With Cancer](#) report, presenting findings from a global survey of 4,585 women across 23 countries. The survey revealed that only one-in-five (20%) women diagnosed with cancer believe they receive enough support to manage their family responsibilities or fit work around their condition, 45% were aware of the signs and symptoms of cancer prior to diagnosis, and nearly half (47%) had never attended a screening program. The results have subsequently indicated there is room for improvement to promote understanding of all cancers and their risk factors, and to increase awareness and access to cancer screening programs and support services for women. Additionally, a quarter (25%) of women perceived themselves to be more stigmatized than men by their disease.

Belén Garijo, CEO Healthcare and Member of the Executive Board of Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany said, "In addition to making the most effective medicines accessible, we aim to accompany and support women with cancer throughout their difficult journey. This study gives us first-hand information about the countless



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aspects of a woman's life that are impacted after a cancer diagnosis that need to be taken into account to improve their health and quality of life.”

Designed with input from the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC), the survey revealed that one-third (34%) of women reported receiving no support at all from their employer following their diagnosis, and less than half (45%) of those of childbearing age said they had been offered family planning advice from their healthcare professional. Compounding the challenges faced, only 42% of the women surveyed had accessed support services, suggesting awareness of the support and educational resources available to women living with cancer may be low or that such services need to evolve to better fit what women really need.

The survey further showed the need for greater education regarding cancer in women. Many women underestimated the risk factors associated with cancers that are not widely considered ‘women’s cancers’, such as lung and colorectal cancer. Older women, and those in lower- and upper-middle income countries were also found to be less aware overall of the signs and symptoms of cancer prior to their diagnosis, compared to those in high-income countries. The results suggest a greater focus is needed, regardless of income and level of education, to improve women’s understanding and recognition of the signs, symptoms and risk factors of cancer, particularly those of high-risk in women.

Cary Adams, CEO of the UICC said, “We must deploy every tool we have at hand to increase women's awareness of cancer symptoms. Not just of cancer types which are unique to women, but also of others like lung, colorectal and stomach cancers. The UICC calls on the global cancer community to help women better understand the signs and symptoms of cancers and ensure that they present at a stage which improves their chances of survival.”

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Early diagnosis of cancer is recognized to increase the chance of successful treatment and the survey highlighted the need for greater awareness and understanding of cancer screening programs and the role they play. For women who did not attend cancer screening programs, the three most significant reasons were not taking their symptoms seriously (52%), fearing a diagnosis (38%) and delaying a visit to their healthcare professional due to cost (29%). Women aged 18-40 were more likely to face delays in diagnosis (49%) compared to other age groups, mainly due to not taking their symptoms seriously (43%).

The *Supporting Women With Cancer* program was conducted in support of the [Healthy Women, Healthy Economies](#) initiative, which brings patients, governments, healthcare professionals, employers and other interested stakeholders together to help improve women's health — so that they can join, thrive and rise in their communities. Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany is committed to supporting female patients across all aspects of life, including post-diagnosis and treatment, and working with the cancer community to find solutions to turn these insights into meaningful outcomes for women living with cancer. Included in the report are several recommendations on how this could be achieved.

To read the full *Supporting Women With Cancer* report, click [here](#).

About the survey:

The *Supporting Women With Cancer* survey was conducted by Cello Health, a thought-leading health advisory firm, in 2018. Women in the following 23 countries were surveyed: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Colombia, France, Germany, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Mexico, Poland, Spain, South Africa, South Korea, the United Kingdom and the United States. Across the entire survey globally, the sample was 4,585 women, with 200 participants per country except in Kazakhstan (n=201), Jordan (n=204) and South Korea (n=180). The sample sizes were chosen to collect a representative sample in each country and allow robust analysis and comparison across countries. The sample sizes were also selected to adequately allow for sub-analyses to take place, looking at country income level, region, age, education level, dependant status and diagnosis delay status. Survey participants were required to be female and have received a diagnosis and treatment for cancer; be aged between 18 and 80 years old, with a minimum quota for women living with cancer aged 18-40 to aid analysis.

About Healthy Women, Healthy Economies:

The *Supporting Women With Cancer* research supports the *Healthy Women, Healthy Economies* global initiative that brings together governments, the private sector and other stakeholders such as non-

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governmental organizations (NGOs) and patient groups to address women's health so women — and by extension their families — can live better lives.

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About Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany

Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, a leading science and technology company, operates across healthcare, life science and performance materials. Around 52,000 employees work to make a positive difference to millions of people's lives every day by creating more joyful and sustainable ways to live. From advancing gene editing technologies and discovering unique ways to treat the most challenging diseases to enabling the intelligence of devices – the company is everywhere. In 2018, Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, generated sales of € 14.8 billion in 66 countries.

The company holds the global rights to the name and trademark "Merck" internationally. The only exceptions are the United States and Canada, where the business sectors of Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany operate as EMD Serono in healthcare, MilliporeSigma in life science, and EMD Performance Materials. Since its founding 1668, scientific exploration and responsible entrepreneurship have been key to the company's technological and scientific advances. To this day, the founding family remains the majority owner of the publicly listed company.