RARE DISEASE DAY: CREATING AWARENESS AND DELIVERING HOPE

February 29, 2016 (OTTAWA) – BIOTECanada today joined researchers, patients, and practitioners in recognizing international Rare Disease Day. Annually held on the last day of February, Rare Disease Day was established to raise awareness regarding rare diseases and the challenges faced by individuals suffering from these disorders.

"Thankfully for rare disease patients in Canada and around the world, many companies like those that are members of BIOTECanada are developing breakthrough medicines and therapies to address the unique medical needs associated with rare disorders. Given the uniqueness of the diseases, discovering and successfully developing therapies for patients requires a strong and vibrant ecosystem that includes world-leading science, entrepreneurship, investment capital as well as a globally competitive regulatory framework," commented Andrew Casey, President and CEO of BIOTECanada.

"Canadian biotechnology companies have strong history of undertaking ground-breaking research which has led to the development of new drug therapies that have fundamentally, and in some cases, permanently improved the lives of thousands of Canadian patients and many more globally that are afflicted with rare disorders. Through the development and implementation of a Canadian regulatory framework unique to drugs for rare disorders, the Government will establish the stable policy environment necessary to attract investment capital to Canada. This investment is an essential component in driving increased orphan drug research and development in Canada. In this context, the industry looks forward to working closely with the Government to develop the final policy framework."

Orphan drugs are used in the treatment of rare disorders. These rare diseases affect less than 1 in 2000 people in Canada and are often severe, life threatening, and progressively debilitating genetic diseases. Over the last thirty years, many countries have adopted measures to promote the development of medicines for rare diseases and facilitate increased patient access to these life changing therapies.

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