

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



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NFCA Launches First Celiac Disease Continuing Education (CE) Program

seeks to reduce medical costs associated with most common autoimmune disorder in U.S.

Ambler, PA (December 9th, 2009)- National Foundation for Celiac Awareness (NFCA) proudly announces the launch of its Gluten-Free Resource Education Awareness Training (GREAT) Healthcare program, the nation's first comprehensive continuing education program for healthcare professionals and medical practitioners dedicated to the topic of celiac disease. The autoimmune digestive disorder affects 1 in 133 Americans, about 1% of the total population.

GREAT Healthcare is a Continuing Education (CE) program that gives practitioners the tools and resources needed to both recognize celiac in their clients and patients, and provide the necessary appropriate care for all individuals diagnosed with the disease.

Additionally, GREAT Healthcare equips professionals with information on support and follow-up services for those with celiac, information and assistance on management of the gluten-free diet, as well as lifestyle and wellness resources for patients and families.

While increased awareness efforts of the digestive disorder have resulted in over 110,000 increased cases since 2003, over 95% of Americans with the disease remain undiagnosed resulting in a fourfold increase in the risk of early death and numerous debilitating conditions including infertility, neuropathy and even cancer. The only treatment is a lifelong gluten-free diet eliminating all forms of wheat, barley and rye.

GREAT Healthcare seeks to improve the current rate of diagnosis by increasing awareness of celiac among health professionals, as well as understanding of the 300 known symptoms, and various presentations associated with the disease.

"Celiac disease is known as 'The Great Masquerader', often times stumping the physician with its myriad of manifestations. With GREAT Healthcare, the primary care provider has a multi-disciplinary team of trained professionals able to help recognize and diagnose the patient," said NFCA Director of Program Development Loretta Jay, who created the GREAT Healthcare program.

GREAT Healthcare will not only improve the quality of life for Americans affected by celiac and prevent unnecessary human suffering, but help curb the billions of dollars currently spent misdiagnosing the disease, as well as costs associated with further complications.

The Journal of Insurance Medicine reports those with celiac reduce individual yearly healthcare costs 20% on average after properly diagnosed by a medical professional. However, those with the disorder currently wait an average of 10 years before receiving an accurate diagnosis.

"GREAT Healthcare gets to the root cause and rectifies this problem so we can identify the 2.8 million people in this country who are needlessly ill and costing billions in unnecessary healthcare," said NFCA executive director Alice Bast.

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GREAT Healthcare offers customized learning modules for:

- Practicing physicians
- Nurses and nurse practitioners
- Psychologists
- Social workers
- Dietitians
- Pharmacists
- Occupational therapists
- Physician assistants
- Hospital foodservice professionals

The curriculum is fully accredited to meet the continuing education requirements for: The American Academy of Family Physicians (with reciprocal agreements with AMA, AOA and College of Family Physicians of Canada,) American Academy of Nurse Practitioners, American Nursing Credentialing Center, American Dietetic Association, American Psychological Association, National Association of Social Workers, American Occupational Therapists Association (pending), American Culinary Federation, and is soon to be developed and submitted to Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education.

GREAT Healthcare was piloted in early 2009 in cooperation with Saint Barnabas Health Care Systems of New Jersey. The program was implemented in all 18 facilities, with the goal of completing training for personnel in all disciplines, including clinicians, dietitians, and food service staff.

Margaret Weiss Masiello, Clinical Coordinator of the Kogan Celiac Center of the Saint Barnabas Healthcare System said, "GREAT Healthcare provided our healthcare professionals with a heightened awareness and education about celiac disease and its only treatment, the gluten free diet."

Masiello continued, "The ability of the NFCA to work within the parameters of our large, integrated health care system, interact with employees at all levels and deliver a professional product made this organization the ideal partner for implementing a program of this scope."

For additional information, visit www.celiaccentral.org.

About Celiac Disease

Celiac disease is an autoimmune digestive disease that damages the small intestine and interferes with absorption of nutrients from food. Left untreated, people with celiac disease can develop further complications such as other autoimmune diseases, and some cancers. 1 in 133 Americans have celiac disease, but over 95% live undiagnosed. The only known treatment for celiac disease is a lifelong adherence to a gluten-free diet.

About The National Foundation for Celiac Awareness

NFCA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to raising awareness and funding for celiac disease that will advance research, education and screening amongst medical professionals, children and adults. Visit www.celiaccentral.org or call 215-325-1306 x104 for further information.

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