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Contact: Christine Feheley (703) 253-4374

Colleen Fogarty (703) 549-1500, ext. 2146

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(619) 525-6213

American Diabetes Association Uses Information Technology to Improve Diabetes Prevention, Management in Beacon Communities

Joins CDC and ONC to Target Detroit and New Orleans with Mobile Health IT Campaigns

June 25, 2011 (San Diego, California) – The American Diabetes Association, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC) have joined forces in a nationwide program to increase the use of health information technology (IT) in helping individuals better prevent and manage diabetes and its complications, with a special emphasis focusing on campaigns launching this fall in Detroit and New Orleans, the groups announced at a press conference at the American Diabetes Association’s 71st Scientific Sessions®.

The Beacon Community Cooperative Agreement Program – a three-year capstone project of the ONC – provides funding to 17 diverse communities throughout the United States, from Maine to Hawaii, with higher than average health IT adoption. Beacon Communities are regional health IT “innovation hubs” aiming to use health information technology to improve health care outcomes in 17 diverse communities.

Starting this fall, two of these communities – Detroit and New Orleans– will launch new public health campaigns leveraging mobile health (mHealth) technology to help individuals assess their risk of type 2 diabetes and provide them with timely, relevant health information and access to local health and wellness resources. Both cities are partnering with Voxiva, a leading mHealth provider, to develop and provide these services.

“Across the country, Beacon Communities are using technology to improve health care delivery in their local communities,” said Aaron McKethan, Director, Beacon Community Program, ONC. “The mobile health campaigns planned for Detroit and New Orleans are geared toward helping more patients understand their risk factors for disease and connecting them to their doctors or clinics and other community resources to better manage their health,” he said.

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“These communities are looking for unique ways to further reduce the burden of diabetes – reducing both the morbidity of diabetes-related complications and the excess mortality attributable to diabetes,” said David Kendall, MD, Chief Medical Officer, American Diabetes Association. “The pilot programs in Detroit and New Orleans are a joint effort to find all possible means to achieve this, in particular using mobile health technologies.”

“The increasing number of Americans with diabetes or at high risk of developing type 2 diabetes is a significant problem for individuals and for the United States,” said Ann Albright, PhD, RD, Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Division of Diabetes Translation. “It is important to use mobile technology and other methods to connect people to effective ways to improve their health. CDC looks forward to working with this innovative project and the potential application to the CDC-led National Diabetes Prevention Program.”

The model for this project is the national Text4Baby campaign that delivers evidence-based health tips via text message to pregnant women and new moms. Text4baby started small but grew quickly; more than 500 health organizations in all 50 states have joined the Text4Baby partnership and it has enrolled more than 185,000 women across the country and delivered over fifteen million text messages to help keep mothers and their babies healthy. Voxiva is a founding partner of Text4Baby and will provide the mHealth platform for the mobile health pilots in Detroit and New Orleans.

“I am delighted that this effort is being started in New Orleans which has a population that has been very severely affected by diabetes and its complications,” said Vivian Fonseca, MD, Professor of Medicine and Pharmacology, Tullis, Tulane Alumni Chair in Diabetes and Chief, Section of Endocrinology at Tulane University Health Sciences Center. “There are currently 385,000 people living with diabetes in Louisiana, about 90,000 of whom are in the New Orleans metropolitan area.”

“There will be a massive effort to get the word out about these services,” added Fonseca, who is also President-Elect, Medicine and Science, for the Association. “We want to ensure that people who are at risk for diabetes, but who may not have many resources at their disposal, or who may not realize they need to take preventive health measures, can navigate their way to the health resources they need. Type 2 diabetes and its complications are often preventable, but only if people know their risk factors and address those areas where they may be at risk, such as by losing weight, developing a regular exercise program or getting treatment for elevated cholesterol and blood pressure levels.”

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Robin Nwankwo, RD, MPH, CDE, an Association volunteer who serves on the Leadership Board for the Michigan and Northern Ohio market, said, “These services will be particularly useful in the Detroit area, where 21 percent of the population of Wayne County (which includes Detroit) have been diagnosed with type 1 or type 2 diabetes, compared to 9 percent for the state as a whole. This is probably in large part due to a high prevalence of obesity and a high population of African Americans and Native Americans.”

“We intend to reach the people in New Orleans through this campaign, to better understand the health gaps in our community, and to connect those individuals with the health care and wellness resources they need to live healthier lives,” said Bruce D. Greenstein, Secretary of the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals. “We think this project can be a model for other states and other communities across Louisiana to follow.”

With an emphasis on reaching out to those who may have diabetes but have not been diagnosed and those at risk for diabetes, these mobile health campaigns allow engagement with a large population while simultaneously tailoring information to the individual based on their own risk factors. In most cases, this involves ensuring that patients connect to medical personnel who can help them manage their condition before costly complications arise.

Over the next two months, the CDC and American Diabetes Association will work with Beacon Community grantees and Voxiva to design and deploy these new campaigns and test them in the these two large urban areas before rolling out more broadly. This collaboration will include the design of the tools and interventions as well as the development of effective communications that make the best use of local resources to help patients manage their own health and connect with their own doctors more effectively. The pilots also will evaluate the effectiveness of this approach in connecting people at risk of diabetes to the care they need.

The American Diabetes Association, CDC, and ONC’s Beacon Communities will seek additional partners to join this collaboration to help make the most effective use of health IT approaches in addressing very specific health and health care challenges in these Beacon Communities. The first two pilots then will inform additional pilots among Beacon Communities later this year and into 2012.

The communities included in the Beacon Communities program are in Brewer, Maine; Spokane, Washington; Grand Junction, Colorado; New Orleans, Louisiana; Stoneville, Mississippi; Cincinnati, Ohio; Tulsa, Oklahoma; Hilo, Hawaii; Buffalo, New York; Salt Lake City, Utah; Indianapolis, Indiana; Danville, Pennsylvania; Providence, Rhode Island; San Diego, California; Detroit, Michigan; Rochester, Minnesota; and Concord, North Carolina.

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The American Diabetes Association is leading the fight to stop diabetes and its deadly consequences and fighting for those affected by diabetes. The Association funds research to prevent, cure and manage diabetes; delivers services to hundreds of communities; provides objective and credible information; and gives voice to those denied their rights because of diabetes. Founded in 1940, our mission is to prevent and cure diabetes and to improve the lives of all people affected by diabetes. For more information please call the American Diabetes Association at 1-800-DIABETES (1-800-342-2383) or visit www.diabetes.org. Information from both these sources is available in English and Spanish.

CDC's Division of Diabetes Translation works to reduce the preventable burden of diabetes through public health leadership, partnership, research, programs, and policies that translate science into practice. For more information, please visit www.cdc.gov/diabetes.

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