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Diane Tuncer
American Diabetes Association
(703) 299-5510

Christine Feheley
American College of Cardiology
(301) 581-3425

Joanne Gallivan
National Diabetes Education Program
(301) 496-6110

FIGHT AGAINST DIABETES AND HEART DISEASE LINK INTENSIFIES: MORE EFFORTS NEEDED TO HELP PEOPLE WITH DIABETES MANAGE THE “ABCS OF DIABETES”

During Diabetes Month, New Public Service Campaigns Focus On the Importance Of Managing Blood Glucose, Blood Pressure and Cholesterol

ALEXANDRIA, VA (November 4, 2004) – A number of recent reports indicate that people with diabetes are not meeting recommended goals for blood glucose (sugar), blood pressure and cholesterol levels. Failing to meet these goals places these people at an extremely high risk for heart disease and stroke, the leading causes of death for people with diabetes. During American Diabetes Month in November, the American Diabetes Association (ADA), the American College of Cardiology (ACC), and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' National Diabetes Education Program (NDEP) are urging people with diabetes to learn how they can reduce their risk for cardiovascular disease, which kills two out of three people with diabetes.

“Heart disease is taking a huge toll on people with diabetes, and most people living with diabetes do not realize it,” said Vivian Fonseca, M.D., Chair, ADA Professional Practice Committee and Professor of Medicine, Tulane University Health Sciences Center. “If you have diabetes, you are likely to have other health problems such as high blood pressure and cholesterol that contribute to an increased risk for heart disease and stroke. By managing blood pressure and cholesterol, along with blood glucose, people with diabetes can protect their hearts and reduce their chances for long-term health problems.”

According to a national study conducted in 1999-2000 and published in the January 2004 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, only 7.3 percent of people with diabetes met recommended guidelines for all three risk factors--blood glucose, cholesterol and blood pressure levels. Additional research released at the American Diabetes Association's 64th Annual Scientific Sessions in June indicate that only one-third of people with diabetes meet the ADA's goals for LDL (or “bad”) cholesterol, and that nearly half of all people with diabetes have uncontrolled high blood pressure.

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Clinical trials have clearly demonstrated that lowering of blood pressure and LDL cholesterol can prevent heart disease and stroke in people with diabetes, but until recently the relationship between blood glucose levels and heart disease and stroke has been less clear. Two studies published in the September 21, 2004 issue of *Annals of Internal Medicine* confirmed that higher levels of A1C, indicating poor blood glucose control, are associated with an increased risk of heart disease and stroke.

“These studies show that the A1C level is an independent risk factor for heart disease and stroke and suggest that improving blood glucose control will reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke in people with diabetes,” said Michael J. Wolk, M.D., president, American College of Cardiology. “Through ongoing clinical trials, we will continue to learn more about the best ways to prevent heart disease and stroke in people with diabetes. It is up to people with diabetes to work with their health care providers and take charge of their health to reduce their risk for heart disease and stroke.”

“Heart disease and stroke are the leading killers of people with diabetes, and it is our duty as educators to work to reduce these preventable deaths,” said James R. Gavin III, M.D., Ph.D., chair, National Diabetes Education Program and president and professor, Morehouse School of Medicine. “We know from survey research that patients are still not taking the necessary steps to combat their risks for heart disease and stroke. We’re working to provide them with the tools they need.”

ADA, ACC, and NDEP are united in urging people with diabetes to talk to their health care providers about the “ABCs of Diabetes:” A is for the A1C test, which measures average blood glucose over the past 2 to 3 months; B is for blood pressure; and C is for cholesterol. People with diabetes need to ask their health care providers what their ABC numbers are and how to reach their target numbers.

Recommended ABC Targets:

- **A1C** - less than 7 percent. Check at least twice a year.
- **Blood pressure** - below 130/80. Check at every doctor’s visit.
- **Cholesterol (LDL)** - below 100. Check at least once a year.

The same steps are necessary to manage blood glucose, blood pressure, and cholesterol: make wise food choices, get daily physical activity, and take prescribed medications. People with diabetes should also avoid smoking and should ask their health care providers about taking aspirin.

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For Diabetes Month, two complementary public service announcement campaigns are being launched as part of ADA's and ACC's nationwide professional and patient education initiative called *Make the Link! Diabetes, Heart Disease and Stroke*. The first PSA, entitled "Choose to Live," portrays diabetes as a silent killer that can alter one's life in a dramatic way, serving as a wake-up call for people with diabetes. "Break Your Heart," the second PSA, is a powerful, text-only approach that reveals the devastating effects diabetes can have on the heart. The PSA campaign features television, print, and radio ads in both English and Spanish.

A free "Diabetes Survival Guide" booklet has been developed to give people with diabetes information they need to help protect themselves from diabetes-related complications such as heart disease and stroke. The booklet is available by calling, toll-free, 1-800-DIABETES. The NDEP has adapted educational materials that promote the ABCs message in English, Spanish and 15 Asian and Pacific Islander languages. These materials can be found at www.ndep.nih.gov.

The American Diabetes Association is the nation's leading voluntary health organization supporting diabetes research, information and advocacy. Founded in 1940, the Association has offices in every region of the country, providing services to hundreds of communities.

The American College of Cardiology, a 30,000-member nonprofit professional medical society and teaching institution, is the leading organization dedicated to being an advocate for quality cardiovascular care—through education, research promotion, development and application of standards and guidelines—and to influencing health care policy.

The National Diabetes Education Program promotes awareness of the ABCs of diabetes through its *Be Smart About Your Heart. Control the ABCs of Diabetes* campaign. NDEP, the leading federal government source of information about diabetes prevention and control, is sponsored by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and 200 public and private partners.

For more information on the link between diabetes and heart disease, contact the ADA at 1-800-DIABETES or visit www.diabetes.org/MakeTheLink; or contact NDEP at 1-800-438-5383 or www.ndep.nih.gov.

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