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Landmark Survey Highlights Needs of Unpaid Caregivers of People with Diabetes

Diet and exercise plans, managing blood sugar levels and reliable online information cited as top concerns

Chevy Chase, MD—The Hormone Foundation, the public education affiliate of The Endocrine Society, in collaboration with the National Alliance for Caregiving, today released key findings from a first-of-its-kind survey aimed at better understanding the daily needs and struggles of unpaid caregivers of people with diabetes.

The online survey completed by 1,002 respondents in April 2009 found that the major challenges in caring for those with diabetes include exercise and diet compliance, patient depression and maintaining target sugar levels. Caregivers reported that the physician is their top information source, followed by the Internet. However, while 73 percent of caregivers reported using the Internet to obtain diabetes information, many expressed frustration in evaluating the quality and reliability of online content.

Specific survey findings include:

- More than half of respondents (54 percent) struggle with diet-related issues like cooking, meal planning and non-compliance;
- Nearly half of respondents (49 percent) reported challenges with medical management of diabetes; and
- Twelve percent of respondents reported their own stress and emotional health as a significant concern.

“Caregivers are involved with a wide range of diabetes-related responsibilities and as a result, many report some social and personal health sacrifices due to their caregiving,” said Gail Hunt, president and CEO of the National Alliance for Caregiving. “The more information we have to understand the issues and burdens caregivers experience, the better equipped we will be to provide them with meaningful assistance.”

“This survey identified many important needs among caregivers of adults with diabetes, but this is only the first step,” said Alvin M. Matsumoto, MD, chair of The Hormone Foundation Committee that spearheaded the survey initiative.

“To address the needs identified through the survey, the Foundation will be creating Diabetes Caregiver Central[®], an easy-to-use Web site containing the most up-to-date information relevant to diabetes caregivers. The new Web site will serve as a comprehensive one-stop shop including resources and information about diabetes; diet and exercise; optimizing blood sugar control; managing complications and coexisting illnesses; and handling patient and caregiver stress and mental health,” said Matsumoto.

Diabetes Caregiver Central[®] is expected to go live in the fall of 2010.

Additional findings from the survey suggest that: 92 percent of respondents are often dealing with other conditions in addition to diabetes caregiving; women caregivers are more likely than men to have their mental and physical health affected by their caregiving role; and finally, women caregivers are more likely than men to seek information on diabetes caregiving.

The research for this survey was conducted by Richard Day Research, Inc. and was supported by an educational grant from Eli Lilly and Company.

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About The Hormone Foundation

The Hormone Foundation is the public education affiliate of The Endocrine Society and is a leading source of hormone-related health information for the public, physicians, allied health professionals and the media. Their mission is to serve as a resource for the public by promoting the prevention, treatment and cure of hormone-related conditions through outreach and education. For more information about the Foundation, visit www.hormone.org

About The Endocrine Society

Founded in 1916, The Endocrine Society is the world’s oldest, largest and most active organization devoted to research on hormones and the clinical practice of endocrinology. Today, The Endocrine Society’s membership consists of more than 14,000 scientists, physicians, educators, nurses and students in more than 100 countries. Society members represent all basic, applied and clinical interests in endocrinology. The Endocrine Society is based in Chevy Chase, Maryland. To learn more about the Society and the field of endocrinology, visit our Web site at www.endo-society.org.

About the National Alliance for Caregiving

The National Alliance for Caregiving is a non-profit coalition of national organizations focusing on issues of family caregiving. It was created to conduct research, do policy analysis, develop national programs, increase public awareness of family caregiving issues, work to strengthen state and local caregiving coalitions, and represent the United States caregiving community internationally. For more information about the Alliance, visit www.caregiving.org