Medtronic News

# Medtronic Teams with Medical Device Recipient in English Channel Swim

*Artificial Disc Recipient to Raise Funds for ALS Research*

MEMPHIS, Tenn., Apr 20, 2011 (BUSINESS WIRE) --

In August 2011, Doug McConnell of Barrington, Illinois, expects to be the 48th person over age 50 to successfully swim across the English Channel. He will be swimming more than 21 grueling miles in memory of his father, David, who passed away from ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease). McConnell, 53, who is a recipient of an artificial cervical disc developed by Medtronic, is using this endurance challenge to educate the public about ALS and raise funds for scientific research programs, which will be matched - up to $50,000 - by Medtronic. Medtronic, which pioneered the field of neuromodulation with therapies including deep brain stimulation for Parkinson's disease and neurostimulation for chronic pain management, also conducts research that may further the understanding of other neurological disorders like ALS.

"Swimming the English Channel has always been a dream of mine because I truly love swimming and I appreciate physical challenges," said Doug McConnell. "When I decided to train for this swim, it was obvious to me that this effort could be much bigger, and it could be used to bring attention to a cause that has touched our family."

McConnell's father was diagnosed with ALS in 1994 after having lost strength in his arms nearly two years earlier. Unlike most people with ALS who live between two and five years after the onset of symptoms, David McConnell lived with the disease for 14 years.

"I saw firsthand how ALS affected my father and the struggles he faced with daily activities. Those struggles are profound and far more difficult than most people can imagine. Planning to swim from England to France, while strenuous, pales in comparison to what people with ALS endure, and it helps me put into perspective the challenges people with ALS go through every day."

In late 2009, Doug's own health was threatened when he developed a severely herniated disc between two cervical vertebrae, resulting in the loss of all use of his left arm. After physical therapy and other unsuccessful treatments, Doug underwent a cervical disc replacement procedure with the Medtronic PRESTIGE(R) Cervical Disc system. An alternative to spinal fusion surgery, the device is designed to maintain motion at the treated vertebral segment. The surgery was successful and Doug was back in the pool six weeks later and slowly built back his endurance. Today, Doug has regained strength in his arm and the ability to move his neck to breathe while swimming, and swims without pain.

"Medtronic is extremely proud that Doug benefits from one of our technologies and we hope that our partnership in helping Doug raise ALS research funding will result in increased understanding of this devastating disease," said Pat Wilson, marketing vice president of Medtronic Spinal.

Risks associated with the PRESTIGE(R) Cervical Disc include, but are not limited to, allergic reaction to the implant material and numbness or tingling in the extremities.

Doug's story is inspirational, but his athletic achievements are not necessarily representative of the typical PRESTIGE(R) Cervical Disc patient. As with all therapies, results may vary, and this therapy may not be for you. Talk to your doctor.

One hundred percent of the funds raised by McConnell, in addition to the Medtronic match, will support research at the Les Turner ALS Research Laboratory at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine.

Swimming the English Channel is considered the "Everest of open-water swimming." Since the first person swam the English Channel in 1875, approximately 1,200 have successfully completed the swim. People who attempt this swim have to contend with cold, jellyfish, exhaustion and the stress of dodging traffic in one of the world's busiest shipping corridors.

"We are thrilled that Doug is using this incredible experience of swimming the English Channel as a way to shine the spotlight on ALS and raise funds for critical research at Northwestern," said Wendy Abrams, executive director of the Les Turner ALS Foundation. "We're inspired by his efforts."

A lifelong swimmer, McConnell was a decorated collegiate swimmer at the University of Illinois where he was ranked in the top 25 in the world several times, has completed countless open water swims, and will be participating in training swims around the country leading up to the Channel swim. On April 23rd, he will compete in the 24-mile Tampa Bay Marathon Swim, a major milestone of his training program. McConnell has been training heavily for more than a year, and early on, swam a minimum of 35,000 yards (approximately 20 miles), plus three hours of cross-training at the gym, per week. As training intensifies and the weather improves, McConnell and his training partner, Don Macdonald, will increase the distance of their swims and spend more time in Lake Michigan.

About ALS

Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), often called Lou Gehrig's disease, attacks a person's muscles, gradually robbing them of their ability to walk, speak, eat and breathe, yet usually keeping their mind intact. Approximately 35,000 people at any given time are living with ALS in the United States. It primarily affects adults between the ages of 40 and 70 years of age. While some symptoms are treatable, there is currently no cure for ALS.

About Les Turner ALS Foundation

Les Turner, a Chicago area businessman and father of three, was diagnosed with ALS in 1976 at the age of 36. Established by Les and his friends in 1977, the Les Turner ALS Foundation is recognized internationally and is an independent, publicly supported non-profit organization devoted solely to the treatment and elimination of ALS. The Foundation is affiliated with Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine where it funds two world-class research laboratories and a large multi-disciplinary clinical program. To donate to McConnell's effort to support ALS research and receive the Medtronic match, go to www.LesTurnerALS.org/ALongSwim.

About PRESTIGE(R) Cervical Disc

Developed in collaboration with surgeons by Medtronic's Spinal division, based in Memphis, Tenn., the PRESTIGE(R) Cervical Disc (www.prestigedisc.com) is designed to maintain motion following surgery while replacing a diseased disc that is removed from a patient's cervical spine. PRESTIGE(R) Cervical Disc provides patients suffering from single level cervical disc disease (radiculopathy and/or myelopathy) presenting with herniated discs or vertebral bone spurs an alternative to motion-limiting spinal fusion.

About Medtronic

Medtronic, Inc. (www.medtronic.com), headquartered in Minneapolis, is the global leader in medical technology - alleviating pain, restoring health, and extending life for millions of people around the world.

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