Medtronic News

Medical Device Recipient Successfully Crosses English Channel to Raise Money for ALS (Lou Gehrig's Disease)

MEMPHIS, Tenn., Aug 22, 2011 (BUSINESS WIRE) --

Medtronic (NYSE: MDT) announced cervical disc recipient Doug McConnell successfully completed his swim across the English Channel today. McConnell, 53, of Barrington, Illinois, became the 48th person over the age of 50 to swim across the historic body of water when he reached a finish line on a French beach after swimming nearly 30 miles in 14 hours and 18 minutes. McConnell started in Dover, England about 1:00 p.m. local time and finished at 3:00 a.m. He swam in memory of his father David, who passed away from ALS and to raise money for the Les Turner ALS Foundation's research program 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.

"At the start of the swim we were immediately tossed about by a tide and wind combination that left us with five foot waves. Those conditions stayed with us for 10 hours, but then changed to something a little less violent," said McConnell. "The goal was never to set any time records, but in memory of my father, reach the French beach and create awareness and funding to help find a cure for this devastating disease."

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, has retained the ability to move his neck to breathe while swimming, and swims without pain.

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.

"The support of Medtronic has been successful beyond our wildest expectations, in large part because of Medtronic's artificial disc that enabled me to get back into swimming, along with their matching grant of $50,000 to the Les Turner ALS Foundation," said McConnell. "To date, A Long Swim has raised more than $130,000 for the Foundation and shows no sign of slowing down."

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.

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

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. Additionally, Medtronic, which pioneered the field of neuromodulation with therapies including deep brain stimulation for Parkinson's disease and dystonia, also conducts research that may further the understanding of other neurological disorders like ALS.

Any forward-looking statements are subject to risks and uncertainties such as those described in Medtronic's periodic reports on file with the Securities and Exchange Commission. Actual results may differ materially from anticipated results.

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