Medtronic News

Medtronic Announces $6 Million Philanthropic Effort to Prevent and Control Rheumatic Heart Disease

$6 Million Marks the Largest Private-Sector Contribution to Date to Address One of the World's Most Neglected, Yet Preventable, Diseases Affecting the World's Poor

MINNEAPOLIS - September 25, 2014 - Medtronic today announced a five-year, $6 million (USD) funding commitment from Medtronic Philanthropy to reduce premature mortality resulting from Rheumatic Fever (RF) and Rheumatic Heart Disease (RHD). Funding will support projects focused in three countries yet to be determined.

The commitment was announced today at an event in New York hosted by United Nations' Secretary General Ban Ki-moon celebrating success of *Every Woman Every Child,* a global movement initiated by the United Nations to improve the health of women and children around the world.

According to the World Heart Federation, RHD is the most commonly acquired heart disease in children in many of the world's poorest countries. Resulting from complications of an untreated strep throat infection, of the 350,000 RHD deaths that occur globally each year, more than two-thirds are children and adolescents. RHD also takes a significant toll on mothers. In Africa alone, more than 10 percent of all maternal deaths relate to RHD. Medtronic's program will focus on making significant progress in the next five years toward the World Heart Federation goal of reducing premature mortality from RHD by 25 percent by 2025 for those under 25 years of age, with an emphasis on developing comprehensive projects in targeted countries.

"A strep throat infection should not be a death sentence because of where you live," says Dr. Jacob Gayle, vice president, Medtronic Philanthropy. "We don't fear RHD in industrialized countries because it is the most preventable form of cardiovascular disease. How we treat it is as an indicator of the overall strength of a community's health system and its capacity to reach underserved populations."

According to Gayle, taking steps to improve RHD care should lead to overall improvements within a community's health systems, which leads to better outcomes in cardiac care and other chronic disease issues, such as diabetes.

Over the next five years, funding at country levels will support efforts to integrate RHD interventions into primary care facilities, while leveraging current efforts focused on maternal and newborn care and HIV, including the training of community healthcare workers who will be the link between patients and the health system. All interventions will be implemented with the goal of strengthening the entire health system rather than supporting RHD-only projects.

To drive the work at the global level, Medtronic Philanthropy has created a consortium of global partners consisting of the World Heart Federation, RhEACH, and the Global Heart Network. Together, these organizations will work to influence policy decisions related to RHD, serve as a technical hub for RHD that can provide assistance to all countries where RHD is prevalent, elevate the voice of people living with RHD and increase the network of supporters for RHD. In addition, funding will support a first-of-its-kind technical hub for RHD, with data and learnings from country projects made available to others addressing RHD.

"For too long, RHD has been ignored," says Gayle. "We hope this effort will spark a global movement among the RHD community that will go far beyond the scope of this project. The true test of how well it works will be the seamless continuation of the effort once we complete this five-year commitment."

About Rheumatic Heart Disease

The most serious complication of untreated Group A strep throat infection, RHD is the major cause of acquired heart disease in the world's poorest countries. More than 30 million people are estimated to be living with RHD, which is most rampant in non-industrialized countries. More than 350,000 people die annually from the disease, two-thirds of which are children or

adolescents. Acute rheumatic fever primarily affects the heart, joints and central nervous system, with an ability to cause fibrosis of heart valves, leading to crippling valvular heart disease, heart failure and death.

About the Global Partners

The World Heart Federation drives the global cardiovascular disease agenda through a network of more than 200 member organizations, with a focus on low- and middle- income countries, and a commitment of reducing premature RHD mortality by 25 percent by 2025 for those under 25 years of age.

RhEACH is a global organization providing technical support, policy advice and advocacy to amplify rheumatic heart disease control efforts locally, regionally and globally.

The Global Heart Network's mission is to amplify change and increase patient access to cardiac care across the globe by connecting efforts and initiatives with people in need.

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. Medtronic Philanthropy focuses on expanding access to quality chronic disease care among underserved populations worldwide (www.medtronic.com/philanthropy)

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