



# News Release

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **The Merck Company Foundation Creates Alliance to Reduce Health Care Disparities in Diabetes**

WHITEHOUSE STATION, N.J., U.S.A., June 3, 2008 -- The Merck Company Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Merck & Co., Inc., today announced the creation of the *Merck Alliance to Reduce Disparities in Diabetes*, an initiative designed to address the growing disparities in health care among minority, low-income and underserved adult populations in the United States who have or are at risk for developing diabetes. The Merck Company Foundation will support the Alliance with up to \$15 million in funding during the next five years.

"This initiative reinforces Merck's ongoing commitment to diabetes and to promoting access to quality health care by helping to develop comprehensive diabetes prevention and management programs," said Dr. Jeffrey L. Sturchio, president, The Merck Company Foundation.

Health care disparities are a growing concern in the United States for many chronic health conditions, including diabetes. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that approximately 21 million people or 7 percent of the U.S. population have diabetes and that the prevalence of diabetes increases with age.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the medical costs associated with managing and treating diabetes and its complications are substantial, with the American Diabetes Association estimating the direct and indirect costs of diabetes and its complications in the U.S. at \$174 billion in 2007.<sup>2</sup> The U.S. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality reports that disparities exist in almost all aspects of health care, including all dimensions of quality of and access to care for many chronic conditions, including diabetes.<sup>3</sup>

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"Reducing health care disparities related to diabetes requires a comprehensive approach," noted Dr. Sturchio. "Through this Alliance, we hope to empower patients to become more involved in their health care, build strong communications between patients and their health care providers, and assist health care organizations in implementing system-level changes to reduce disparities."

Working with national, regional, and community partners, the Alliance will develop, implement, and evaluate comprehensive, evidence-based diabetes programs in selected communities around the country that:

- Apply program models to address health care disparities related to type 2 diabetes and its associated conditions or complications among minority, low-income, and underserved adult populations
- Enhance patient and health care provider communication, mobilize community partners, and assist health care organizations to decrease disparities in diabetes care
- Improve the quality of health care for adults who have or are at risk for type 2 diabetes
- Decrease health care disparities related to diabetes and its associated conditions or complications
- Increase public awareness of the problem of health care disparities and diabetes

Earlier this year, The Merck Company Foundation issued a "Call for Proposals," inviting submission of letters of intent to develop proposals for comprehensive diabetes prevention and management programs to help reduce disparities in diabetes care. This process is now complete, and the letters of intent are currently under review.

In late 2008, The Merck Company Foundation plans to announce several five-year health care disparities and diabetes programs that include components for the patient, clinicians and health systems. The Foundation will work with an independent third-party organization to evaluate the impact of the Alliance and its programs. For more information, visit [www.merck.com/cr/alliance.html](http://www.merck.com/cr/alliance.html).

### **About The Merck Company Foundation**

The Merck Company Foundation is a U.S.-based, private charitable foundation. Established in 1957 by the global research-driven pharmaceutical company Merck & Co., Inc., the Foundation is funded entirely by the Company and is Merck's chief source of funding support to qualified non-profit, charitable organizations. Since its inception, The Merck Company Foundation has contributed more than \$524 million to support important initiatives that address societal needs

and are consistent with Merck's overall mission to enhance the health and well-being of people around the world. For more information, visit [www.merckcompanyfoundation.org](http://www.merckcompanyfoundation.org).

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<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2005). *National Diabetes Fact Sheet, United States 2005*. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved from [http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/pubs/pdf/ndfs\\_2005.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/pubs/pdf/ndfs_2005.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> American Diabetes Association (ADA). (2008). Economic costs of diabetes in the U.S. in 2007 *Diabetes Care*, 31(3), 1-20.

<sup>3</sup> Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ). (2007). National healthcare disparities report, 2007—full report. Rockville, MD: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality.