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HD **Tick-Borne Disease; A First! Lyme Research Center Opens at Columbia Through Partnership with Lyme Disease Association and Time for Lyme**

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LP 2007 MAY 9 - (NewsRx.com) -- In a move that coincides with scientific concern worldwide over global warming and resultant increase in range and numbers of ticks and tick-borne diseases, Columbia University is opening the first endowed research center for chronic Lyme disease April 30. The Lyme & Tick-Borne Diseases Research Center in New York will use its vast resources to bring together various disciplines from within and outside of the University to address fundamental clinical and basic science questions that plague adults and children affected by Lyme disease.

TD According to Brian Fallon, MD, director, "Benefits accrue exponentially when scientists from multiple disciplines apply their specific expertise to solve complex problems. This is what is so tremendously valuable about this new Center at Columbia, as the solutions to fundamental diagnostic and treatment questions require the coordinated effort of highly skilled scientists using the latest in biotechnology that only a university-based center can provide." Dr. Fallon, associate professor of psychiatry at Columbia, is also director of NYS Psychiatric Institute's Lyme Disease Research Program.

The Center's clinical and research mission includes studies of new diagnostic tests, clinical phenomenology, co-infections, genetic markers, brain imaging, neuropathology of post-mortem brains, new treatments and tick pathogens. This Center will serve as a national resource, providing pilot grants to researchers nationwide and focusing the latest scientific technology on resolving chronic Lyme problems.

As Lyme cases increase worldwide, so does development of chronic disease, which may result from delayed diagnosis and delayed or inadequate treatment. While much is known about early Lyme disease, relatively little is known about chronic Lyme disease, despite its disabling effects, which may include arthritis, cognitive loss, peripheral neuropathies, and debilitating fatigue. Sometimes, Lyme may cause strokes, blindness, severe psychiatric disorders, and multiple-sclerosis-like illnesses. Adults may become permanently disabled, and children may be home sick for months or years, missing key academic and social influences so critical to healthy development.

Internationally acclaimed author (and Lyme patient) Amy Tan expresses "my deep gratitude to all those whose commitment helped create this world-class center for Lyme disease research. For many of us, it is also a center for hope. We now know there is support for the best minds in science and medicine to work toward more accurate diagnosis and more effective treatment of a widespread and devastating disease."

The national NJ-based Lyme Disease Association and CT-based Time For Lyme, affiliated organizations, partnered with Columbia in the development of this center and devoted major resources over 5 years to funding the endowment. People nationwide contributed to make this effort a success. Pat Smith, LDA President, said, "This is a banner day for everyone connected to Lyme disease and those at risk for tick-borne diseases. Columbia University now houses a premier center which will focus efforts on a definitive Lyme test, chronic Lyme disease, tissue studies, and even tick pathogens. The unsettled science which has clouded diagnosis and treatment will be closely examined in an environment where researchers are interested in discovering the truth about Lyme disease."

The Lyme Disease Association is a national nonprofit organization that devotes ninety-eight percent of its funds to programs - funding research, education, prevention and patient support. LDA-funded research has been published in peer review including JAMA, Neurology, Infection, and the Proceedings of the National Academy of Science. Recognizing that the ability to find solutions involves a multi-disciplinary effort, the LDA has partnered with businesses, patient groups, celebrities, government, and the medical community to unlock the secrets of Lyme and other tick-borne diseases. LDA's 8th fully CME-accredited medical conference for physicians will be held in Boston in October.

<http://www.lymediseaseassociation.org/>

Time For Lyme's mission is to prevent the spread of tick-borne diseases, develop definitive diagnostic tools and effective treatments, and to find a cure by supporting research, education, and the acquisition and dissemination of information. TFL advocates for Lyme disease sufferers and their families through support of legislative reform on the federal, state and local levels. <http://www.timeforlyme.org/>

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