



## **High priced materials may not be needed by all diabetics**

**(Nov. 8, 2006, EDMONTON, AB)** – Diabetes experts from across the country will gather in Edmonton next week to discuss whether individuals with Type 1 or Type 2 diabetes really need to test their blood sugar on a daily basis. The Institute of Health Economics (IHE) will host the *first ever* consensus development conference in Canada on self-monitoring in diabetes.

“The main purpose of a consensus conference, like next week’s, is to assess scientific evidence on a health issue,” explained Dr. Jeff Johnson, Canada Research Chair in Diabetes Health Outcomes at the University of Alberta, and consensus conference organizing committee member. “After the panel evaluates the evidence, a statement is developed that answers a number of pre-determined questions.” In this format, experts present the evidence to a panel, or “jury”, which is an independent, broad-based, non-government, non-advocacy group. The panel listens to and questions the experts on their stance, while the audience is also given the opportunity to question the experts. The panel is then ‘sequestered’ overnight to develop a consensus statement, which is then read to the experts and the audience on the morning of the final day. The statement will be published and disseminated widely in the scientific community.

“The reason the initial consensus conference is focusing on self-monitoring in diabetes is because it is a highly controversial issue among experts in the field,” said Michael Decter, the conference’s panel chair. “For instance, the cost of self-monitoring is quite significant, both to the individual and to the health-care system. Test strips cost about a dollar each and, quite frankly, this price tag consumes a large portion of the cost of care for diabetics. Is this good value for the money? That’s part of what the panel will be arguing next week.”

Peter McDougall, diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes nearly four years ago and the parent of a son with Type 1 diabetes, will speak from an individual’s perspective on day two of the conference. He says, as a Type 2 diabetic he sometimes has a sense of powerlessness in trying to manage the disease.

He also says that for many individuals with diabetes, testing is truly a financial burden. "Ironically, those with the lowest incomes are also the least likely to have test strip coverage benefits and yet, they probably have the greatest need to test themselves simply because of lifestyle and nutrition."

The consensus conference takes place at The Westin Edmonton beginning at 1 p.m. on **Tuesday, Nov. 14**, continues all day on **Wednesday, Nov. 15** and wraps up at noon on **Thursday, Nov. 16**. Several noted individuals are featured at the conference including:

- The Honourable **Iris Evans**, Alberta's Minister of Health and Wellness;
- Former broadcast journalist and the former Consul General of Canada in New York, **Pamela Wallin**; and
- Former Edmonton Oilers' defenseman and Stanley Cup winner, **Dr. Randy Gregg**, who now operates a highly successful medical practice in Edmonton

To arrange pre-conference interviews with Dr. Jeff Johnson, Michael Decter or Peter McDougall:

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