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**NON-PROFIT MERCK CHILDHOOD ASTHMA NETWORK INVESTS MILLIONS IN
COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS TO HELP CHILDREN BETTER MANAGE ASTHMA**

*CHAMPS Partnership will Increase Access to Comprehensive Asthma Care for Impoverished,
Medically Underserved Children and Families*

WASHINGTON, D.C., October 5, 2011 – The Merck Childhood Asthma Network, Inc. (MCAN) today announced more than \$4 million in funding to implement the **Community Healthcare for Asthma Management and Prevention of Symptoms (CHAMPS)** partnership in five non-profit, Federally Qualified Health Centers. This investment in community health centers (CHC) is designed to demonstrate how asthma management tools proven effective in controlled trials, can be applied in real-world settings where many children and families most in need get care.

The world-class experts in community health research, programming and evaluation that make up the CHAMPS partnership are The George Washington University (GW) School of Public Health and Health Services, the RCHN Community Health Foundation and Rho. CHCs selected to participate in CHAMPS, all of which serve large numbers of children with asthma, are located in Tucson, AZ, the Grand Rapids, MI area and Rincon, PR.

“We have the tools and we know which programs work to help children with asthma – it is time to make them available for those who bear a heavy burden of the disease,” said Dr. Floyd Malveaux, Executive Director of MCAN and former Dean of the College of Medicine at Howard University. “The CHAMPS health centers will implement programs that have been shown to be highly effective in managing childhood asthma and, hopefully, bring about needed improvements for these children.”

MCAN’s investment responds to results of its earlier studies and to a report authored by GW that identified CHCs as an ideal setting for treating high-risk children with asthma. Specifically, the GW report found that CHCs serve as the primary place where as many as 20 percent of low-income children with asthma receive care. Dr. Malveaux said that successful management of childhood asthma requires a medical home and community health centers are great models that can empower families with the knowledge and tools needed to better manage their children’s disease.

Funding for the program will cover a four-year period of planning, implementation, dissemination and evaluation of the CHAMPS programs. The evidence-based intervention that will be used across all CHC sites is a "hybrid" of two highly published scientific studies, the National Cooperative Inner City Asthma Study (NCICAS) and the Inner City Asthma Study (ICAS). NCICAS uses a case-management approach and ICAS addresses identification and remediation of factors in the home that worsen asthma symptoms. At the conclusion of the study, GW and Rho will work in partnership with the centers to: (1) Assess successful implementation strategies; (2) Identify best practices for replication; (3) Refine and implement a common protocol; (4) Evaluate health outcomes and cost benefit; and, (5) Develop recommendations to change health practices and policies essential to successfully managing childhood asthma. More information can be found online at: <http://gwhealthpolicy.org/champs>.

Participating CHCs include:

The **El Rio Community Health Center** in Tucson is one of the largest health centers in the country. The Center is a leader in providing accessible and affordable health care to the medically underserved and sees more than 70,000 people each year across 16 delivery sites – over 4,000 are children with asthma. El Rio participated in ICAS and implemented a model that is, in part, based on NCICAS. The program has been successful in reducing the number of days when asthma limited a patient's ability to exercise and days of missed school for hundreds of children with asthma.

Cherry Street Health Services (CSHS) and its network of partners, **Baldwin Health Center** and **Clinica Santa Maria**, provide comprehensive primary health care to more than 50,000 medically underserved patients in the Grand Rapids, MI area each year – nearly 2,000 of whom are children with asthma. Since 2000, CSHS has been involved with the National Asthma Health Disparities Collaborative and has been responsible for improvements in the management of asthma for hundreds of children, including reduction in symptom severity and emergency room visits.

The **Rincon Health Center** provides primary and preventive care to more than 700 children with asthma in and around Rincon, Puerto Rico. Because of the extraordinary burden of asthma in Puerto Rico, the issue has been an important focus of Rincon's work over the years. Rincon will implement the CHAMPS program in partnership with another MCAN-funded program, La Red de Asma Infantil de Merck de Puerto Rico based in San Juan.

"The healthcare settings selected for CHAMPS are diverse by design," said Anne Rossier Markus, JD, PhD, MHS, Associate Research Professor, GW School of Public Health and Health Services. "We will confirm that interventions will only be successful if they are tailored to their local environment and uncover common findings that can be shared with other centers across the country."

About Childhood Asthma

Asthma is the single most common chronic condition among children. In 2008, one in every 11 children – 6.95 million – had asthma, a number that has grown steadily over the 1997-2008 time period. It is also costly. The nation spends between \$8 and \$10 billion alone on treating childhood asthma, more than any other childhood condition. Indirect costs which include missed school days and lost wages for a parent or care giver who is caring for a child, approach \$10 billion annually. While asthma affects children in every community across the country, low income and minority children bear the heaviest burden of the disease and its consequences, including death. Compared with white non-Hispanic children, asthma is nearly twice as high among Puerto Rican children and twice as high in African-American children.

About the Merck Childhood Asthma Network

The Merck Childhood Asthma Network, Inc. (MCAN) is a separately incorporated, non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization established to address the complex and growing problem of pediatric asthma. Funded by the Merck Company Foundation, and led by Floyd Malveaux, MD, PhD, a nationally recognized expert in asthma and allergic diseases and former Dean of the Howard University College of Medicine, MCAN is specifically focused on enhancing access to quality asthma care and management for children in the United States. For more information, visit www.mcanonline.org.

About RCHN Community Health Foundation

The RCHN Community Health Foundation, founded in October 2005, is a New York-based not-for-profit operating foundation whose mission is to support community health centers through strategic investment, outreach, education, and cutting-edge health policy research. The only foundation in the country dedicated to community health centers, the Foundation builds on health centers' 40-year commitment to the provision of accessible, high quality, community-based healthcare services for underserved and medically vulnerable populations. For more information, visit www.rchnfoundation.org.

About The George Washington University

Established by the George Washington University Board of Trustees in 2002, the Department of Health Policy, located within the School of Public Health and Health Services, has as its mission the education of public health students in all phases of U.S. and comparative health policy. The Department is also a leading center of health policy research, with a research portfolio of approximately \$50 million in 2010. For more information, visit www.gwumc.edu/sphhs.

About Rho

Rho, a privately-held, contract research organization (CRO) located in Chapel Hill, NC, has been a trusted partner to pharmaceutical, biotechnology and medical device companies as well as academic and government organizations for more than 25 years. Rho has collaborated in the design and analysis of clinical trials, mechanistic and biomarker studies, preclinical studies, non-interventional studies, translational studies, and has participated in numerous publications from these efforts. For more information, visit www.rhoworld.com.

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