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**LEADING CHILDHOOD ASTHMA FOUNDATION INVESTS MILLIONS IN NATION'S HIGH RISK CITIES TO IMPLEMENT BEST PRACTICES TO MANAGE THE DISEASE**

*Improved Health Outcomes Prompts Merck Childhood Asthma Network to Renew Funding in Four Programs Working to Manage a Disease That Requires More than Medical Care*

WASHINGTON, D.C., November 10, 2010 – The Merck Childhood Asthma Network, Inc. (MCAN), today announced it is targeting four high risk cities with nearly \$4 million for programs that will combine evidence-based science, case management and asthma trigger removal plans to manage a disease that requires more than the right medical care. Programs in Chicago, Los Angeles, Philadelphia and San Juan, Puerto Rico – all cities with high rates of childhood asthma – will enroll children and families in the most comprehensive asthma management research program ever designed for the community level.

MCAN's funding, an investment that will cover a four-year period of enrollment, education, implementation and evaluation, follows previous investments in each of the cities that resulted in positive health outcomes. While still being analyzed, results include decreasing the number of missed school days in half, a decrease in symptom days and an increase in the number of families whose children have asthma action plans.

"When it comes to overcoming the enormous cost, health and personal burdens of childhood asthma, we knew it required more than dusting off the clinical research and parachuting it into different parts of the country. We needed to be there, to see how the research translated on the ground," said Dr. Floyd Malveaux Executive Director of MCAN and former Dean of the College of Medicine at Howard University. "Our continued community partnerships will reveal the best ways to manage a disease with roots that are both biological and environmental."

The evidence-based programs allow the different communities to both adhere to rigorous asthma management fundamentals and tailor the approach to meet their particular needs. To evaluate the effectiveness of this approach, researchers at the Center for Managing Chronic Disease at the University of Michigan will lead a cross-site program evaluation and help disseminate findings that could impact public health practices and policies surrounding the management of childhood asthma.

The **Addressing Asthma in Englewood Project** is based on the Southside of Chicago and is a collaborative effort of the University of Illinois, School of Public Health and the Respiratory Health Association of Metropolitan Chicago. The program centers around a community educator model and links children with asthma to appropriate services, education programs in schools, community groups, and local agencies; and a home visit case management program to enhance asthma education, identification and mitigation of asthma triggers.

In Los Angeles, MCAN is partnering with the **LA Unified School District for the "Yes We Can" Children's Asthma Program** in the nation's second largest school district. The program involves a care coordination and education model that will extend beyond the immediate school clinic to include system changes between health, educational and community settings. The program will triage students and families into the appropriate level of intervention, improve the coordination of care between schools, clinics and community providers, and will focus on measuring symptom reduction and school days missed.

In Philadelphia, the **Children's Hospital of Philadelphia's You Can Control Asthma Care Coordination Program** will utilize asthma health care navigators located within four primary care centers operated by the hospital. Navigators will work with primary care providers as an integral member of the family's asthma care team assisting families in the identification and reduction of asthma triggers in the home, providing self-management education, and other support and resources for families of high risk children with asthma.

The **La Red de Asma Infantil de Merck de Puerto Rico** program involves evidence-based interventions as part of an asthma care coordination program across home, health care and community settings. The program will be implemented in the Nemesio Canales Housing Project in San Juan, Puerto Rico by the University of Puerto Rico and RAND Health. "La Red" aims to promote asthma-friendly communities throughout the island of Puerto Rico and to enhance access to quality asthma healthcare for this highly vulnerable and underserved community.

According to Dr. Malveaux, one of the keys to moving forward and making broad, systemic change, will be to demonstrate the results, disseminate the approaches and sustain the important work MCAN's partners are achieving in their communities.

"While the health improvements we have seen to date in individual communities have been overwhelmingly positive, the real potential lies in the ability to make the lessons learned applied as broadly as possible, to help as many children with asthma as possible," Dr. Malveaux said. "Long term and wide spread change is the goal of our next phase of work."

#### **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 \$8 billion alone on treating childhood asthma, more than almost 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 60 percent higher among African-American children and nearly 300 percent higher among Puerto Rican 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](http://www.mcanonline.org).

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