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FAMILY HEALTH AND WELLNESS IS TOP PRIORITY FOR PA PHYSICIANS

Pennsylvania Medical Society Unveils Community Outreach Program to Guide Patients in Making Healthy Lifestyle Decisions.

Harrisburg, PA- The Pennsylvania Medical Society will ring in the new year with a new health initiative. January marks the introduction of “Family Health and Wellness”, a campaign to assist Pennsylvania families in making important medical decisions.

The Pennsylvania Medical Society is the commonwealth’s largest physician membership organization and the state’s only advocate for both doctor and patient rights. In its continuing commitment to improve the delivery of healthcare services, the Society has created Family Health and Wellness. The campaign exists to empower patients with proactive health strategies and lifestyle guidelines.

Medical experts agree that a patient’s health is directly related to the people around them – including their doctors. “We don’t get sick or stay well by ourselves. The people closest to us affect every aspect of our health – and our own well-being affects theirs.” (*Newsweek*) Family Health and Wellness will open dialog between patients and their physicians by providing accessible health information throughout Pennsylvania.

Healthy living, preventative medicine, and successful treatment all begin with a good doctor/patient relationship. As Robert Ferrer, M.D. at the University of Texas Health Sciences Center points out, “The myth is that health is all about individual choices and individual treatments...but we’re embedded in families and communities, and they have a big effect on our options.”

To maximize the doctor/patient relationship, the campaign will address a different issue of concern to commonwealth families each quarter. To establish the core focuses of Family Health and Wellness 2006, the Society interviewed a panel of physicians in varying specialties to identify rising health trends.

The health threats of highest local concern for 2006 include: Aging, Asthma and Allergies, Mental Health, and Obesity. The program will address these four topics by communicating with patients on multiple levels – from special events, to promotional partnerships, to a website.

“Doctors on Call” – an annual televised event allowing patients to call in toll-free with personal medical questions – is one facet of the Family Health and Wellness Campaign. William Lander, M.D. and president of the Pennsylvania Medical Society states, “Our goal is to reach out to as many patients as possible throughout the state who need physicians’ advice on their health concerns.” Approximately 120 doctors are “on call” at the statewide event to guide callers and steer them towards the care they need.

Another public initiative will involve a series of media education tours throughout Pennsylvania. Each quarter, a speaker will address vital information associated with the medical theme.

Family Health and Wellness will also partner with local radio stations to broadcast public service announcements on healthy lifestyles, medicinal tips, and general care pointers. Additional Program Partners including the YMCA and local P.T.O.’s will disseminate information on quarterly featured topics. The campaign is still seeking additional Program Partners. If you are interested, please contact the Pennsylvania Medical Society at www.pamedsociety.org.

The Medical Society is also launching an exclusive Family Health and Wellness website. Dedicated to fostering good doctor/patient relationships and providing accessible information, it will host event announcements, an interactive health assessment (designed to help patients better understand lifestyle choices), and a downloadable medical history information card. The site will also include resource links to patient-centric medical articles, tips for finding a physician, and specific facts on the quarterly featured topic.

Because Pennsylvania is a national leader in terms of senior population, Family Health and Wellness’ first topic will focus on aging and related issues affecting both patients and their caregivers.

Senior citizens face special health issues because elderly people are most susceptible to illnesses, injuries, and disabilities. Tackling these challenges is an increasingly difficult battle due to government spending cutbacks, mobility limitations, and the rapid growth of Pennsylvania's centurion population.

The Medical Society physicians will serve as authorities on prevention and proactive management of the chronic illnesses and degenerative conditions associated with ageing. Esteemed Dr. Pat Magee, a Society member and national eldercare expert, will lead the first Media Relations tour, visiting Harrisburg, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh. Discussions will guide the elderly and their caretakers in getting the most out of a doctor's visit, making good health decisions, and communicating effectively to improve quality of life.

The Family Health and Wellness Campaign is an important step in equipping, educating, and enhancing patient health. You can visit the Family Health Information website at pafamilyhealth.com and browse the "patient tips, tools, and takeaways" section. You will find ample information on the present topic of aging, and many other resources from the Pennsylvania Medical Society. Here's to your health in 2006!

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