



FIND THE

AAAnswers

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FOOTBALL LEGEND JOE THEISMANN TEAMS UP WITH LEADING MEDICAL SOCIETIES AND MEDTRONIC TO SAVE LIVES FROM ABDOMINAL AORTIC ANEURYSMS (AAA)

Gridiron Great Shares His Personal Connection with AAA And Joins Clinical Experts for Campaign to Increase Usage of Low-cost Ultrasound Screenings for Life-threatening Conditions

NEW YORK – Sept. 22, 2009 – Professional football legend Joe Theismann joined leading physicians, patients and advocates today to kick-off “Find the AAAnswers,” a multi-faceted public education campaign designed to save lives from abdominal aortic aneurysms (AAA) by increasing the number of people at risk for this life-threatening condition to seek a low-cost ultrasound screening.

An abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA) is a balloon-like bulge in the body’s main artery that can burst unexpectedly with often fatal consequences – making it the third leading cause of sudden death in men over 60.¹ More than one million people are living with an undiagnosed AAA,² and only 10-25 percent of those people will survive if their aneurysm ruptures.³⁻⁶ A simple, inexpensive ultrasound screening could help save these lives.

The goal of the campaign is to increase the number of at-risk people who are screened each year in an effort to reduce unnecessary deaths from abdominal aortic aneurysms.

Sponsored by Medtronic, the program is supported by the Find the AAAnswers Coalition, an alliance of concerned medical societies that have come together to provide accurate information about AAA and increase the number of at-risk individuals that get screened. The medical societies include the Society for Vascular Surgeons, the American College of Preventive Medicine and the Society for Vascular Ultrasound.

“Research shows that more than 70 percent of men with risk factors for abdominal aortic aneurysms have never heard of the condition or that there is a simple screening test that could potentially save their life. It’s this lack of awareness and understanding that led us to support this initiative,” said Tony Semedo, vice president and general manager of the Endovascular Innovations business at Medtronic (NYSE: MDT). “We’re proud to sponsor the Coalition and committed to ensuring that accurate information reaches all those potentially at risk.”

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Abdominal aortic aneurysms are most often found when a physician is performing a test for another condition, because they usually grow silently without any noticeable symptoms or warning signs. When detected prior to rupture, 95 percent of these aneurysms can be managed and successfully treated.² The risk of AAA rises in individuals over the age of 60 with a history of smoking, high blood pressure, high cholesterol or a family history of the disease.

Due to his family history of abdominal aortic aneurysms, Joe Theismann understands the risks associated with this disease. “My father was lucky. He wouldn’t be here today if his

aneurysm had not been detected through a routine exam, but most people with AAA won't be as fortunate," said Theismann. "Through this program, I hope to inspire people to learn more about AAA and ask the right questions. Today, a quick and painless ultrasound can detect the condition and possibly save a life."

The Find the AAAnswers campaign will help individuals, local communities and healthcare professionals take action against AAA. Campaign activities include:

- Education and screening events in local communities with a high prevalence of AAA
- An interactive Web portal where individuals can learn more about AAA and make a personal pledge to get screened (www.FindtheAAAnswers.org)
- Educational materials and resources on AAA screening for healthcare professionals, patients and their loved ones
- Public service announcements on the importance of AAA screenings
- Events with healthcare advocates and policy influencers to identify current challenges in AAA care and advocate for meaningful change

"We all have a personal stake in making vascular wellness and disease prevention a top priority," said R. Clement Darling III, MD, Member, Board of Directors, Society for Vascular Surgery (SVS); Chair, SVS Communications Committee; Professor of Surgery, Albany Medical College; Chief, Division of Vascular Surgery, Albany Medical Center Hospital. "We, as vascular and endovascular surgeons, are excited to be part of this effort to increase public awareness about AAA, and save lives through evidence-based disease prevention programs. This is a lethal disease that if picked up early is treatable."

This campaign is especially timely because Congress is reviewing legislation that will broaden coverage for at-risk Medicare recipients. Currently, abdominal aortic aneurysms are offered as part of the "Welcome to Medicare" physical exam, but required within the first 12 months of enrolling and only eligible for men who have smoked at least 100 cigarettes, or men and women with a family history of the condition. More information about the campaign – including resources on abdominal aortic aneurysms and details on campaign initiatives – is available online at www.FindtheAAAnswers.org.

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About Abdominal Aortic Aneurysms

An abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA) is a blood-filled bulge or ballooning of a weakened area of the abdominal aorta, the artery that carries blood away from the heart to the lower part of the body. As the bulge grows over time, the wall of the aorta becomes weaker. This may cause the aorta to rupture and lead to severe pain and massive internal bleeding. A ruptured aneurysm can cause death and needs immediate medical attention.

Fortunately, most abdominal aortic aneurysms can be detected through a simple, inexpensive ultrasound screening. Because AAA often has no warning signs, a preventive screening is an effective way to detect a potentially life-threatening aneurysm early enough for treatment.

About the Find the AAAnswers Coalition

The Find the AAAnswers Coalition is an alliance of medical societies that have come together to provide accurate information about abdominal aortic aneurysms and increase the number of at-risk individuals that get screened. Coalition partners include:

- American College of Preventive Medicine (ACPM)
- Society for Vascular Surgery (SVS)
- Society for Vascular Ultrasound (SVU)

About Medtronic

Medtronic, Inc. (www.medtronic.com), headquartered in Minneapolis, is the global leader in medical technology – alleviating pain, restoring health and extending life for millions of people around the world.

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¹ Ohki T, Veith FJ. Endovascular Repair of Ruptured, AAAs In treating AAAs, endovascular repair may hold the key over open repair to lowering mortality. *Endovascular Today*. January 2004;47-51.

² Society for Vascular Surgery. Protect Yourself From An AAA Rupture. http://www.vascularweb.org/patients/prevention/aaa_rupture.html. Accessed August 3, 2009.

³ Mealy K, Salman A. The true incidence of ruptured abdominal aortic aneurysms. *Eur J Vasc Surg* 1988;2:405-8.

⁴ Johansen K, Kohler TR, Nicholls SC, et al. Ruptured abdominal aortic aneurysm: the Harborview experience. *J Vasc Surg* 1991;13:240-5; discussion 245-7.

⁵ Heikkinen M, Salenius J, Zeitlin R, et al. The fate of AAA patients referred electively to vascular surgical unit. *Scand J Surg* 2002;91:345-52.

⁶ Brown PM, Pattenden R, Verwooy C, Zelt DT, Gutelius JR. Selective management of abdominal aortic aneurysms in a prospective measurement program. *J Vasc Surg*. 1996;23:213–220.