

NEWS RELEASE

COMMUNITY MEDICAL FOUNDATION FOR PATIENT SAFETY

6800 West Loop South, Suite 190
Bellaire, Texas, 77401

Website: www.communityofcompetence.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 16, 2006

MEDIA CONTACT:

Elizabeth Smith, Ph.D.

Telephone: 832-778-7777

Fax: 281-920-1118

Email: esmith@crgmedical.com

Community Medical Foundation Joins Montana Coalition

BELLAIRE — Community Medical Foundation for Patient Safety, a local nonprofit research and educational foundation for patient safety and healthcare quality, has been invited by the Montana Coalition to join in its ambitious effort to study workplace safety and reduce work-related injuries in the State of Montana. The Coalition is addressing specifically the prevalent incidents of carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS) among workers and is quickly developing national leadership in the application of cutting-edge technology and innovations for primary prevention of workplace injury.

The Montana Coalition focuses on CTS because the cost associated with this injury in terms of medical care and lost productivity is very significant. According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), \$0.68 of every Workers' Compensation claim dollar is spent on repetitive stress injuries, including CTS. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) estimated CTS costs employers more than \$40 billion annually. Workers' Compensation Commission reports that the mean absence from work due to CTS is about 44 days. When workers return, 73% will not go back to the same job. Furthermore, the current methods of diagnosing CTS is not accurate, meaning many cases of injury are not properly identified or some treatments are not appropriate. NIOSH recognizes CTS and other musculoskeletal injuries as major occupational problem not just in Montana but throughout the entire country.

Community Medical Foundation joins the Coalition whose membership includes Advanced Rehab, LLC; Gateway Economic Development Corp.; Helena Physical Therapy Associates, PC; Kada Medical Instruments; Lopach and Carparelli, PC; Montana State Fund; and Work Wright, Inc. Community Medical Foundation will provide independent research support for the Coalition to conduct an 18-month pilot study to examine the association between hand functionality and job functionality of workers in Montana. Matthew C. Mireles, Ph.D., M.P.H., President and Director for Research of Community Medical Foundation has been named principal investigator of this study. Mireles will collaborate directly with Joel E. Cleary, M.D., MHA, a Coalition member who will oversee the medical protocol of the study.

Mireles earned his Bachelor of Science in Biomedical Engineering from Texas A&M University and his Master of Public Health in Occupational Health and Safety and Aerospace Medicine and his doctorate in Epidemiol-

--MORE--

ology from University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston at the School of Public Health. He was selected recipient of the NIOSH Assistantship in Occupational Epidemiology, 1999-2002, which partially funded his doctoral research in the diagnosis of traumatic occupational eye injuries. With his academic degrees in engineering and public health, Mireles was instrumental in securing the School of Public Health's designation as a NIOSH Training Center in Occupational Health and Safety. In 1997, Mireles was invited by NIOSH to participate in the National Occupational Injury Research Symposium, Morgantown, VA, to discuss and implement the National Occupational Research Agenda (NORA), which is still in effect today.

Elizabeth Smith, Ph.D., Executive Director of Community Medical Foundation, states that "...a prime effort of our Foundation is to work with partners, such as the Montana Coalition, to improve the overall quality of life through research and education, particularly in the area of workplace safety which begins with the right job selection and placement so that job satisfaction, quality, and productivity can be achieved."

The Montana Coalition is truly a working example of the Foundation's concept of "Community of Competence" developed and trademarked by Elizabeth Smith, where experts meet to share their knowledge and experiences and work together toward solutions for complex problems. Members of this Coalition anticipate the findings from this pilot study in Montana would provide an important cost-effective benchmark in workplace safety and injury prevention for the rest of the country.

###