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NEW COALITION TAKES ACTION TO IMPROVE LOW INFLUENZA IMMUNIZATION RATES AMONG CHILDREN

NFID's Childhood Influenza Immunization Coalition Holds First Meeting of Experts to Launch National Initiatives Aimed at Making Influenza Prevention a National Health Priority

Bethesda, Maryland, May 24, 2007 — More than 20 of the nation's leading public health, medical, patient, and parent organizations came together yesterday to outline critical steps to increase childhood influenza immunization rates in the United States. The *Childhood Influenza Immunization Coalition (CIIC)*, formed by the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID), announced that the new coalition will conduct far-reaching initiatives to encourage health care professionals and parents to take action toward improving pediatric influenza immunization rates this upcoming influenza season.

Richard H. Carmona, M.D., M.P.H., FACS, the 17th Surgeon General of the United States (2002-2006) and current President of the Canyon Ranch Institute, has been appointed Chairman of NFID's *Childhood Influenza Immunization Coalition*.

“Influenza is a serious, highly contagious disease that each year sends thousands of children to hospital emergency rooms and costs nearly 100 American children their lives,” said Dr. Carmona. “By increasing the number of children who are protected from the flu by pediatric influenza immunizations, sharing health information with parents, and using best practices and proven health strategies in every part of our great nation, we can significantly reduce the number of children who get the flu and, in doing so, improve their overall well-being.”

The recommendations *CIIC* outlined include encouraging health care professionals and parents to use every opportunity to vaccinate children – during sick visits, well visits, or back-to-school check-ups – throughout the influenza season. Currently, fewer than one in five children between 6 and 23 months get the needed influenza immunizations.

CIIC will create an interactive web site that will provide member organizations, health care professionals, and the general public with educational information on pediatric influenza. Professional educational resources to help pediatricians and other health care professionals throughout the United States increase childhood influenza immunization rates will be housed on the web site, which will launch in summer 2007, before the next influenza season.

“Because of the serious impact of influenza on children’s health and well-being, there is a critical need for all infants and children aged 6 to 59 months, and children and adolescents with chronic medical conditions, to be vaccinated annually,” said Carol J. Baker, M.D., NFID President and moderator of the meeting. “Member organizations of the *Childhood Influenza Immunization Coalition* have banded together to work through their affiliates and constituents – collectively hundreds of thousands of individuals – to increase activities in support of our end goal: increased pediatric influenza immunizations.” Dr. Baker, a pediatric infectious disease specialist, is a professor of Pediatrics, Molecular Virology and Microbiology, and head of the Section of Pediatric Infectious Diseases at Baylor College of Medicine, Houston, Texas.

The *Childhood Influenza Immunization Coalition* will meet again in fall 2007 to continue assessing public health needs and the progress of its ongoing initiatives.

About the NFID *Childhood Influenza Immunization Coalition*

NFID formed the *Childhood Influenza Immunization Coalition (CIIC)* in 2007 to make pediatric immunization a national health priority and to educate parents about influenza and the benefits of annual immunization.

Organizations that are members of and support the goals of NFID’s *CIIC* initiative include: Allergy & Asthma Network Mothers of Asthmatics, American Academy of Pediatrics, American College of Cardiology, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, American Lung Association, American Medical Association, Asian and Pacific Islander American Health Forum, Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, Canyon Ranch Institute, Families Fighting Flu, Inc., Immune Deficiency Foundation, Immunization Action Coalition, Kaiser Permanente, National Association for the Education of Young Children, National

Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners, National Association of School Nurses, National Foundation for Infectious Diseases, National Hispanic Medical Association, National Medical Association, Parents of Kids with Infectious Diseases, and the Society for Adolescent Medicine.

CIIC is made possible through an unrestricted educational grant to NFID from sanofi pasteur.

About Influenza

Influenza is a serious respiratory illness that, along with its complications, results in an average of 36,000 deaths and approximately 226,000 hospitalizations in the United States each year. All children 6 to 59 months of age and children up to 18 years of age with compromised immune systems and chronic medical conditions, such as asthma and diabetes, are at increased risk for complications from influenza and should be immunized every year. Pregnant women and children 6 to 59 months of age, as well as their household contacts, also should be vaccinated to help prevent influenza-related complications and the spread of this dangerous virus. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), only 18 percent of children 6 to 23 months of age were fully immunized for influenza during the 2004-2005 season, the most recent influenza season for which data is available.

About the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases

The National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID) is a non-profit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization founded in 1973 and dedicated to educating the public and healthcare professionals about the causes, treatment and prevention of infectious diseases. For more information, please visit www.nfid.org.

About Canyon Ranch Institute

Canyon Ranch Institute is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to inspiring and educating people across America so they can make positive, healthy choices for themselves and their families. More information is available at www.canyonranchinstitute.org.

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