

## Grammy Award Winner LeAnn Rimes Leads New Nationwide Consumer Education Initiative To Help Patients Treat Eczema Now

(NAPSA)—Eczema, or atopic dermatitis, is on the rise, with an estimated 35 million Americans currently suffering from flares of intensely itchy, red and irritated skin—the hallmark of this disease. Nine out of 10 people who have eczema see symptoms before the age of five, and many sufferers continue to endure the physical symptoms for decades thereafter.

The itch and inflammation of eczema can profoundly impact patients' lives, as it did to Grammy award winner LeAnn Rimes. Now LeAnn is leading the charge as the spokesperson for Treat Eczema Now, a nationwide public education initiative by Novartis Pharmaceuticals aimed at helping eczema patients to have a more effective dialogue with their physicians about their condition.

"Eczema has had a profound impact on me throughout my childhood and teen years, and I've never felt comfortable discussing my condition before. But with the help of my physician, now I feel like my eczema is under control," says Rimes. "I'm sharing my experiences through Treat Eczema Now to encourage other patients to take action and work with their doctor to find an effective way to manage their disease."

Like many patients, LeAnn—who suffers from mild-to-moderate eczema—was forced to avoid situations that might cause a flare-up. She would often stay home from the beach or the pool on hot afternoons just to avoid wearing a bathing suit and exposing a red, itchy, eczema flare. Sometimes, she even wore two pairs of pantyhose while doing a performance, to disguise the eczema on her legs.

"I've tried many treatments over the years, from light box therapy to steroid creams, but I was experiencing some side effects, and my doctor and I were concerned about long-term control of my condition," explains Rimes.



**LeAnn Rimes is speaking out for the first time about her experience with eczema as a spokesperson for a new nationwide public education initiative called Treat Eczema Now. For more information, patients and caregivers can call toll-free at 1-877-MY-ECZEMA.**

At one point in her life, LeAnn visited her doctor weekly in hopes of identifying an appropriate treatment strategy. LeAnn currently manages her eczema with steroid-free Elidel, which her doctor prescribed for use at the first signs of an eczema flare (tingling sensation and/or redness) to manage her disease and control flares.

Despite the availability of effective treatment options, according to The Eczema Survival Guide—a comprehensive, new report developed by the National Eczema Association for Science and Education (NEASE) in conjunction with Novartis Pharmaceuticals—there is a disconnect between many physicians and patients about the successful management of this disease.

The Treat Eczema Now initiative seeks to bridge the patient/physician communication gap around effective disease management. The program features an educational Web site at [www.TreatEczemaNow.com](http://www.TreatEczemaNow.com),

which includes a downloadable version of The Eczema Survival Guide to help prepare eczema sufferers to talk to their doctors about the disease, identify triggers that may cause an eczema flare-up and understand their treatment options. A summary of LeAnn's personal experience with eczema, tips for coping with the disease and frequently asked questions about the condition are also featured on the site. Patients and caregivers can also receive additional information about eczema and the Treat Eczema Now campaign by calling toll-free at 1-877-MY-ECZEMA.

While there is no cure for eczema, Elidel can help control it. Elidel® (pimecrolimus) Cream 1%, from Novartis, is a safe and effective option for the long-term management of mild-to-moderate eczema. It is the only steroid-free prescription cream approved for the short-term and intermittent long-term treatment of mild-to-moderate eczema in patients as young as two years old, who do not respond well to, or may have side effects with, conventional treatments. Elidel can be used twice daily at the first sign of a flare, which has been described by some patients as tingling or itch. If symptoms persist beyond six weeks, patients should see their doctor.

In clinical trials with Elidel, the most common side effect on the skin included a mild to moderate, temporary feeling of warmth or burning (occurring in 8 percent of children aged two to seven years and in 26 percent of adults). This side effect was temporary and its occurrences were comparable to those experienced by patients on vehicle cream. Other common side effects included headache and cold-like symptoms, such as stuffy nose, sore throat, cough and, rarely, viral skin infections. Patients using Elidel should avoid unprotected exposure to the sun and sunlamps.