



spotlight on health

American Pain Foundation Shines Spotlight On Shingles

(NAPSA)—Real estate consultant Robert Hanley, 71, had just returned from a week's vacation in Florida when some bumps on his back began to itch. He thought it was just some bug bites from sitting alongside the pool. But his wife urged him to see the doctor. Much to his surprise, Hanley was diagnosed with shingles, a frequently painful disease that is marked by a blistering rash on one side of the body or face. Shingles is caused by the reactivation of the virus that caused chickenpox and can affect anyone at any time without warning.

It is estimated that 1 million cases of shingles are diagnosed in the United States each year, 40 to 50 percent of which occur in people 60 and older.

Hanley recalls that when he heard the word shingles, he had no idea of what to expect. While for most people the pain associated with the shingles rash lessens as it heals, some people develop long-term nerve pain called postherpetic neuralgia (PHN), which can last for months or even years. Hanley suffered long-term nerve pain that lasted for nearly a year.

Lack of awareness about shingles is not uncommon. A national survey of 1,064 older people in the United States who reported not having had shingles found that 15 percent had not heard of a medical condition called shingles. Approximately three-quarters of the 1,064 respondents admitted that they knew only some (24 percent), a little (27 percent) or almost nothing/not sure (26 percent) about the disease. Only 8 percent of the respondents said they knew a lot about shingles.



Photo courtesy of Dr. Stephen Tyring
Shingles is marked by a blistering rash on one side of the body or the face.

More than 90 percent of adults in the United States have had chickenpox, placing them at risk for shingles, and the frequency and severity of shingles increase with age.

The survey was released by the American Pain Foundation (APF), which is leading a national health education program, Spotlight on Shingles: Know what you can do, to educate older people in the United States and their friends and family about shingles and its potential complications. Support for the program was provided by Merck & Co., Inc.

“Our message is simple: If you are an older American and have had chickenpox, talk to your doctor or healthcare professional about your risk for shingles,” said APF Executive Director William Rowe. “The early baby boomers are reaching 60 and the older people get, the greater their risk for shingles. This is a topic that more people should know about and talk about.”

A free copy of the Spotlight on Shingles: Know what you can do disease brochure is available at www.spotlightonshingles.com or by calling 1-877-RISK-4-SHINGLES (877-747-5474).