



spotlight on health

Physicians Call For Better Understanding Of Link Between Genetics And Thyroid Disease

(NAPSA)—Most Americans are aware that heart disease and cancer patients may be genetically predisposed to these conditions, but according to a national survey released by the American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists (AACE), more than three-fourths (76 percent) of the population do not know that thyroid disease runs in families.

To counteract this lack of awareness, and encourage Americans to uncover their family health history to discover their at-risk medical conditions, AACE has launched a new campaign, “The Neck’s Generation: Thyroid Genealogy,” to educate the public about the genetic links associated with thyroid disease.

Research shows that there is a strong genetic link between thyroid disease and other autoimmune diseases including certain types of diabetes, anemia and arthritis. In fact, thyroid disease affects more than 13 million Americans, yet more than half remain undiagnosed.

“AACE’s call to action is for each American to educate themselves about their family health history and how it can affect their chances of developing a thyroid disorder. If thyroid disease or other autoimmune diseases run in their family, a conversation with their doctor and a simple blood test can rule out their risk for thyroid problems,” says Rhoda Cobin, M.D., F.A.C.E., and president of AACE.

“Communication was the key that allowed both myself and my daughter to get early diagnoses of thyroid disease,” said Wanda Rockwell of Waldwick, N.J., a patient with hypothyroidism. “If my mother, who also has an underactive thyroid, and I hadn’t discussed



her diagnosis as soon as she went on medication, I would not have known the symptoms to look for—nor would I have realized my daughter was also at risk.”

The thyroid is a butterfly-shaped gland located in the neck, just below the Adam’s apple and above the collarbone. Left untreated, thyroid disease causes serious long-term complications such as elevated cholesterol levels and subsequent heart disease, infertility, muscle weakness and osteoporosis.

“Fifty percent of thyroid disease patients’ offspring will inherit the thyroid disease gene. Since the thyroid gland is critical to every cell, tissue and organ in the body, it is very important for Americans to get tested for thyroid disease—especially if they are experiencing some of the most common symptoms like fatigue, forgetfulness, depression and changes in weight and appetite,” says Hossein Gharib, M.D., F.A.C.E, president-elect of AACE and Professor of Medicine at the Mayo Medical School.

According to the AACE survey, more than half (56 percent) of the American population has never been tested for thyroid disease. The millions who remain undiagnosed reflect the widespread lack of awareness of this serious condition that is easily treatable by taking a levothyroxine sodium pill once a day to restore thyroid hormone to its normal level.