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Donaghue Foundation 2009 Beyond Eureka Conference Asks: What Happens When Social Media and Medicine Collide?

Connecticut's Leading Private Medical Research Foundation Examines Healthcare on the Brink of Radical, Digital Transformation

HARTFORD, CT, (April 8, 2009). At a time when the Obama administration is calling for massive investment in healthcare technology, information, the Patrick and Catherine Weldon Donaghue Medical Research Foundation has announced the program for its fourth annual *Beyond Eureka!* Conference to be held on Wednesday, April 29th from 8AM to 2PM at the Hartford Marriott Farmington Hotel. This year's conference probes the new realities of a healthcare system in flux, as consumers and healthcare providers alike embrace new technologies that challenge convention and enhance connectivity, research, innovation and collaboration.

"Technology impacts our personal and professional lives every day," explains Lynne Garner PhD., Donaghue Foundation Trust & President. "With the new administration's call for massive investment in healthcare technology, and the myriad ways that technology is changing how we communicate and do business, this year's conference simply can't come soon enough.

"For all of us interested in improving healthcare delivery and outcomes through practical application of new insights and best practices – technology will be the catalyst that transforms our visions into reality. The panel we have assembled this year is at the forefront of using technology in practical and meaningful ways to improve communication, advance research and enhance knowledge for both clinicians and consumers."

This year's Beyond Eureka keynote speakers include innovators who are forging new models to reshape doctor-patient relationships, research paradigms and healthcare policy and delivery through the use of new technologies. They are:

Alejandro (Alex) Jadad, MD, DPhil, FRCPC, FCAHS the chief innovator and founder of the Centre for Global eHealth Innovation in Toronto. With his colleagues, Dr. Jadad is building web-based tools to support encounters between the public and the health system, clinicians and their patients. Dr. Jadad is an internationally recognized thought leader on effective avenues-- leveraging new communications vehicles-- for engaging young people in taking charge of their health. He will speak about the urgent need for innovation in order to meet the health care expectations of the *Obama* generation

Sharon Terry, MA President and CEO of the Genetic Alliance. Ms. Terry is at the forefront of the ongoing dialog concerning the use of genetic information in disease prevention and treatment efforts. Through her advocacy work, she brings together diverse stakeholders including government entities, researchers, clinicians, patients, families and communities to ensure that genetic information will improve medical treatments and health systems. Ms. Terry, a Connecticut native who began her work when her children were diagnosed with a rare genetic disease, presents the consumer voice in her frequent appearances in front of the FDA, Institute of Medicine and Congress. Ms. Terry is active in on-line communities and a founder of the Disruptive Women in HealthCare blog.

Ben Heywood, Co-Founder and President of PatientsLikeMe. In just a few short years, PatientsLikeMe has emerged as the leading online community for people with life-changing conditions by creating a platform for collecting and sharing outcome-based patient data and real life experiences among patients. Through data-sharing partnerships with doctors, pharmaceutical and medical device companies, research and non-profit organizations, PatientsLikeMe is transforming the way diseases are addressed and treated. Ben Heywood and his brother Jamie founded PatientsLikeMe together after their brother Stephen was diagnosed with ALS. Their family's story can be seen in the documentary So Much So Fast, which has aired on PBS.

“Our partners and attendees look forward to the Beyond Eureka conference each year as a venue where new ideas are shared and debated,” said Amy Lynch, Bank of America Vice President, and trustee representative to the Donaghue Foundation. “Where technology and inspiration intersect, innovation happens. We are thrilled to have three innovators lead our discussion this year to share their vision of a connected, collaborative healthcare system. These speakers will bring to life how that future is being realized today, which will spark some lively conversation and debate.”

The Medical Research Gap

It takes, on average, 17 years for a medical breakthrough to become part of widely accepted clinical practice. Though “evidence based” treatments exist for many medical conditions, studies indicate that these established treatments are used only about 50% of the time.

Experts agree that stronger relationships between philanthropy, businesses and healthcare providers – with common, shared objectives – may be the key to bridging the gap between discovery and application. Technology may be the missing link to connect these disparate entities and speed the time from theory to practice.

The Patrick and Catherine Weldon Donaghue Foundation funds researchers whose work shows promise of practical benefit. Having witnessed the so-called 'black hole' of scientific discovery, the Foundation works to facilitate the adoption of new findings into practice to improve health.

As home to prestigious academic institutions conducting landmark research with often groundbreaking implications, Connecticut stands to benefit from reducing the time between scientific breakthrough and practical application. With technology changing the way we communicate and collaborate, Connecticut residents and their physicians could lead the nation in creating new collaborative uses for new and emerging technologies. So too would Connecticut-based insurance companies, providers and employers realize the benefits of these care improvements in the face of escalating costs.

About the Beyond Eureka Conference

In addition to the featured speakers and presenters, a number of the Donaghue Foundation's grantees and their research will also be recognized at the conference. Attendance is free and open to the public, with a simple pre-registration required. Those interested can log on to www.donaghue.org to register or for more information.

About the Donaghue Foundation

The Patrick & Catherine Weldon Donaghue Medical Research Foundation was established by Ethel Donaghue in memory of her parents. The Foundation is a charitable testamentary trust dedicated to furthering the search for medical knowledge of practical benefit to human life and to the quality of the lives of people, particularly in Connecticut. The Foundation focuses on initiatives in the state to strengthen research on health issues, to promote future research leadership, and to put new knowledge to work for public benefit.