



Media Contact: Simi Singer
Telephone: 1-310-423-7798
E-mail: Simi.Singer@cshs.org

**WOMEN ENCOURAGED TO LEARN THEIR FAMILY HEALTH HISTORY DURING
GYNECOLOGIC CANCER AWARENESS MONTH IN SEPTEMBER**
Certain Genes Found to Carry 90% Risk for Breast and/or Ovarian Cancer

Los Angeles, August 21, 2006 –The Women’s Cancer Research Institute (WCRI) at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center is joining with the Gynecologic Cancer Foundation (GCF) to educate women about familial breast-ovarian cancer syndrome this September during Gynecologic Cancer Awareness Month. Women with this syndrome have a 90 percent risk of developing breast and/or ovarian cancer during their lifetime.

During September, the WCRI and the GCF recommend that women learn their family history of gynecologic cancer; conduct an online risk assessment at www.wcn.org educate themselves about gynecologic cancers, and make an appointment for their annual gynecologic exam and screening.

According to Beth Karlan, M.D., director of the Women’s Cancer Research Institute at the Samuel Oschin Comprehensive Cancer Center at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, research studies have found that about one of every 500 individuals in the general population are members of a family that will inherit and pass on a mutation in the Breast Cancer 1 (BRCA1) or the Breast Cancer 2 (BRCA2) gene, the cause of familial breast-ovarian cancer syndrome. Women of Ashkenazi Jewish descent have a one in 40 chance of inheriting or passing on the mutation. Women with a BRCA1 gene mutation have an 80 percent chance of developing breast cancer, and a 20 percent to 40 percent chance of being diagnosed with ovarian cancer. Mutations in the BRCA2 gene result in the same sharply higher risk of developing breast cancer as the BRCA1 gene, but fewer women --10 percent to 20 percent-- will be diagnosed with ovarian cancer.

“Because of the high risk of cancer in families that carry this gene, it is extremely important for women to know their family history of these cancers,” says Karlan. “This can be done through a simple blood test that is usually covered by insurance for women at genetic risk. If it is determined that a woman is at increased risk after undergoing genetic testing, she should discuss strategies for managing this risk with her healthcare provider, who can best suggest additional screening exams and risk reduction strategies.”

All women, however, should be screened regularly to help insure that any existing cancers are identified at their earliest, most treatable stages, says Karlan. Women should be familiar with their breasts so that they will notice any changes and report them to their doctor. She recommends that women from 30 to 40 years old have clinical breast exams (a breast exam by your doctor) every one to three years, while women age 40 or older should have annual mammograms and clinical breast exams. Women who are at greater risk because of family history, a genetic predisposition or previous cancer should consider earlier mammograms, additional tests and/or more frequent exams.

(more)

GCF provides information about gynecologic cancers through the Women's Cancer Network at www.wcn.org and through its Information Hotline at 800-444-4441. GCF was founded on the premise that providing women with current information about gynecologic cancers will empower them to take appropriate steps to reduce their risks, and to seek early and appropriate care if symptoms arise.

"It is our hope that during Gynecologic Cancer Awareness Month in September, - and Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October, women will take the opportunity to learn more about the inherited link between breast and ovarian cancer, and indeed, all types of cancers," says Karlan. "Doing so can save lives."

###

The Women's Cancer Research Institute at the Samuel Oschin Comprehensive Cancer Institute at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center is working to eradicate cancer as a threat to women.

The Gynecologic Cancer Foundation (GCF) was established by SGO in 1991 to develop educational programs for women, and create awareness about the prevention, early detection and treatment of gynecologic cancers. The Foundation also supports research and training related to gynecologic cancers.

The first of seven hospitals in California whose nurses have been honored with the prestigious Magnet designation, Cedars-Sinai Medical Center is one of the largest nonprofit academic medical centers in the Western United States. For 18 consecutive years, it has been named Los Angeles' most preferred hospital for all health needs in an independent survey of area residents. Cedars-Sinai is internationally renowned for its diagnostic and treatment capabilities and its broad spectrum of programs and services, as well as breakthroughs in biomedical research and superlative medical education. It ranks among the top 10 non-university hospitals in the nation for its research activities and is fully accredited by the Association for the Accreditation of Human Research Protection Programs, Inc. (AAHRPP). Additional information is available at www.cedars-sinai.edu.

If you have received this news release in error and do not wish to receive future advisories, or if they should be directed to someone else in your organization, please call 1-800-396-1002. Alternatively, you may fax your updated information or your request for removal from our list to 808-697-1249 or e-mail sandy@prpacific.com.