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ASGE AMBASSADOR PROGRAM FOR GI ENDOSCOPIC TRAINING IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES LAUNCHES INAUGURAL COURSE IN CAIRO

OAK BROOK, Ill. – February 3, 2010 – The American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy (ASGE) is ready to launch its inaugural ASGE Ambassador Program, a new initiative designed to export basic and advanced gastrointestinal endoscopic medical care and physician training expertise to developing countries. The first training program will be held February 19 to February 26, 2010 in Cairo, Egypt. ASGE members will serve as “Ambassadors” by volunteering their time to this philanthropic program. The ASGE Ambassador Program has been made possible by the generous support of PENTAX Medical Company, along with donations from AstraZeneca Foundation and US Endoscopy.

“Three ASGE member physicians will train nine participants from throughout Africa. An extensive curriculum, incorporating didactic and hands-on training, will be implemented and 80 to 100 patients will be treated during the course of the training session,” said ASGE President Jacques Van Dam, MD, PhD, FASGE. “This program would not have been possible without the support of our initial sponsor PENTAX. Their donation enabled us to move forward with a program that will bring much needed medical education and endoscopic training to physicians in international centers that are lacking in access to quality gastrointestinal medical care.”

About the ASGE Ambassador Program

ASGE Ambassadors will travel to Cairo and train physicians from Nigeria, Kenya and throughout northern Africa as well as from areas in the Middle East in endoscopy for the diagnosis and treatment of upper gastrointestinal disorders. A significant number of patients in this part of the world suffer from esophageal varices (an enlarged and tortuous vein, artery or lymphatic vessel) that, when left untreated due to the lack of physicians performing endoscopy, leads to death from internal bleeding. Trainees will be recruited based on need, level of experience and availability to travel.

The training will take place in the World Gastroenterology Organization-sponsored Cairo Training Center located in the Theodor Bilharz Research Institute. The curriculum includes a discussion of infection control guidelines utilizing the World Health Organization's cascading, locally-relevant guidelines. A follow-up to the training course will be conducted at one or more of the selected trainee home institutions following the training in Cairo to evaluate the impact of the program on patient care.

ASGE President's Award

In recognition of PENTAX Medical Company's involvement with the ASGE Ambassador Program and their efforts in helping ASGE address the need for endoscopic training in developing countries, ASGE will present David Woods, president, PENTAX Medical Company, with the ASGE President's Award at the Society's annual Crystal Awards dinner on Sunday, May 2, at the Louisiana Superdome during Digestive Disease Week® in New Orleans. The ASGE Crystal Awards symbolize the finest in leadership, research and scientific pursuit. Hosted by ASGE and the ASGE Foundation, the event will recognize the 2010 award and grant recipients who have shared their expertise and strengthened the specialty and the Society.

To become an ASGE Ambassador, physicians must be an active member of ASGE for a minimum of five years. For more information on becoming an ASGE Ambassador, visit <http://www.asge.org/ambassador.aspx>. The ASGE Ambassador Program is funded entirely through the generous support of industry and private donations. For those interested in donating to the Ambassador Program, please visit <http://www.asge.org/ambassador.aspx> or email AmbassadorProgram@asge.org.

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About the American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy

Since its founding in 1941, the American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy (ASGE) has been dedicated to advancing patient care and digestive health by promoting excellence in gastrointestinal endoscopy. ASGE, with nearly 11,000 members worldwide, promotes the highest standards for endoscopic training and practice, fosters endoscopic research, recognizes distinguished contributions to endoscopy, and is the foremost resource for endoscopic education. Visit www.asge.org and www.screen4coloncancer.org for more information and to find a qualified doctor in your area.

About PENTAX

PENTAX Medical Company, headquartered in Montvale, New Jersey, is a division of PENTAX of America, Inc., a consolidated subsidiary of Japan's HOYA Corporation. PENTAX Medical Company is an industry leader specializing in the development of video and fiber endoscopy equipment and computer technology/imaging products for diagnostic, therapeutic and research applications in the GI, ENT and Pulmonary medical fields. For more information on the company and its products, visit the company's website at www.pentaxmedical.com.

About Endoscopy

Endoscopy is performed by specially-trained physicians called endoscopists using the most current technology to diagnose and treat diseases of the gastrointestinal tract. Using flexible, thin tubes called endoscopes, endoscopists are able to access the human digestive tract without incisions via natural orifices. Endoscopes are designed with high-intensity lighting and fitted with precision devices that allow viewing and treatment of the gastrointestinal system.