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Embargoed for Release until:

Tuesday, Feb. 1, 2005, at 10:00 a.m.

**Coalition Launches ParentsMedGuide.org:
“Helping Parents Help Their Kids”**

Washington, D.C. – Today a large coalition of medical and family/patient advocacy organizations launched ParentsMedGuide.org, a new resource center for parents of children and adolescents with depression. A focal point of the Web site is a fact sheet called “The Use of Medication in Treating Childhood and Adolescent Depression: Information for Patients and Families” – practical advice for parents that has been endorsed by more than a dozen national organizations, including:

- American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
- American Association of Suicidology
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
- American Psychiatric Association
- American Society for Adolescent Psychiatry
- Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
- Families for Depression Awareness
- National Alliance for the Mentally Ill
- National Association of Psychiatric Health Systems
- National Mental Health Association
- Society for Adolescent Medicine
- Suicide Awareness Voices of Education, and
- Suicide Prevention Action Network.

“ParentsMedGuide.org was developed to help parents help their kids,” said David Fassler, M.D., chair of the ParentsMedGuide.org coalition and a child and adolescent psychiatrist. “Parents need and deserve as much information as possible in order to make appropriate decisions for their children, and we’re putting it where they can easily find it: on the Web.”

In addition to advice for families, the ParentsMedGuide.org site contains a fully footnoted Physicians Medication Guide, written for frontline physicians, who have joined with parents to seek more accurate information about pediatric depression, treatment alternatives, and the latest science and research findings. The public will also have access to the physician guide through ParentsMedGuide.org, helping to enhance communication between specialists, primary care physicians, and parents.

(more)

The guides and the site will be updated on an ongoing basis with the latest scientific and medical research. They are being launched as new data suggest the number of children receiving treatment that includes antidepressant medication continues to decline.

According to a new analysis from Medco Health Solutions, Inc., a leading pharmacy benefit manager with the nation's largest mail order pharmacy operations, the number of children and adolescents taking antidepressants has decreased swiftly and significantly, coinciding with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's hearings and advisories on the medications over the past year.

The Medco data for the last three months of 2004 reveal a drop of 16 percent compared to the same time period in 2003.

"The evidence clearly suggests that the FDA's action regarding the black box warning is already having a dramatic effect on prescribing patterns across the country," said Dr. Fassler. "As a result, many children are losing access to effective and appropriate treatment."

Gail Griffith, who was the patient representative to the FDA advisory committee that recommended the black box warning, agreed that the warning she voted for has had a chilling effect.

"If I would have known how sharply prescription rates were falling, I would not have voted in favor of the black box warning," said Griffith. "I hoped the FDA could help to inform parents, but it seems many parents have simply become fearful of antidepressants, which so often are the life jacket preventing us from being sucked under by depression's powerful undertow."

Continued Griffith: "As any parent of a depressed or emotionally troubled child will tell you, access to reliable information about possible remedies and treatment options takes on urgency proportional to the degree of your child's suffering. I applaud ParentsMedGuide.org for giving parents the information they need, and in a way that they can access it quickly."

The ParentsMedGuide.org coalition convened for the first time in November 2004 as a work group sponsored by the American Psychiatric Association and the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. The Parent Guide can be found on the Web at www.parentsmedguide.org/parentsmedguide.htm. The Physician Guide is at www.parentsmedguide.org/physiciansmedguide.htm.

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