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Smoking Cessation Drug Also Keeps Weight Off

— Study Offers Hope to Those Afraid Quitting May Lead to Extra Pounds —

(Las Vegas, NV) – November 15 – A drug that helps people quit smoking also helps them prevent the excess weight gain that often plagues ex-smokers, according to research being released at the North American Association for the Study of Obesity (NAASO's) Annual Scientific Meeting.

Rimonabant, developed for the treatment of cardiovascular risk factors, nearly doubles a person's chances of successful smoking abstinence while avoiding post-cessation weight gain, according to results of the first of three Phase III trials. At the end of the 10-week treatment phase of this randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled trial, almost 28 percent of subjects who took 20 mg per day of the drug by mouth had stopped smoking for at least one month compared to 16 percent of those who took placebo. Those who stopped smoking on rimonabant gained only about one pound compared to the approximate 6-pound weight gain seen in the placebo-treated subjects who stopped smoking.

The greatest amount of weight loss on rimonabant was seen in those who weighed the most at baseline. Normal-weight subjects did not lose weight, but were able to maintain their baseline weights on rimonabant. Subjects in the study smoked 10 more or cigarettes per day, with a mean age of 42 years. Results were the same for both men and women.

Both smoking and obesity are considered major risk factors for heart disease, which is the leading killer of people with diabetes.

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“Gaining weight is a serious obstacle for many people who would like to quit smoking,” said lead researcher Lowell C. Dale, MD, Associate Professor of Medicine at Mayo Clinic College of Medicine and the Associate Director of the Mayo Clinic Nicotine Dependence Center. “A lot of people give up and go back to smoking as soon as they start to put on those extra pounds. This is the first drug that allows them to focus on quitting without being distracted by worries of trading one health problem for another.”

These are the initial results of the first of three large clinical trials studying the use of rimonabant for smoking cessation. Long-term outcomes of this trial and the results of the other two trials are still pending. All of these results will be presented to the Food and Drug Administration as part of the extensive approval process necessary before any drug goes to market. Estimates are that the drug could be available by early 2006.

The study was presented as part of a joint effort by NAASO and the American Diabetes Association (ADA) to increase awareness of the rising problem of obesity and its related health problems in the United States. NAASO and ADA recognize obesity as a significant threat to public health and are cooperating to provide further opportunities for sharing obesity information, increasing obesity awareness and facilitating more research and better clinical care in their joint effort to fight this disease.

The North American Association for the Study of Obesity (NAASO) is a leading scientific society dedicated to the study of obesity. NAASO is committed to encouraging research on the causes, treatment and prevention of obesity as well as to keeping the scientific community and public informed of new advances in the field. For more information about NAASO and obesity, visit www.naaso.org or call (301) 563-6526.

The American Diabetes Association is the nation’s leading voluntary health organization supporting diabetes research, information, and advocacy. Founded in 1940, the Association has offices in every region of the country, providing services to hundreds of communities. For more information about the Association and diabetes, please visit www.diabetes.org or call 1-800-DIABETES (1-800-342-2383).

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