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Sjogren's Syndrome Foundation Launches 5-Year Breakthrough Goal

The Sjogren's Syndrome Foundation (SSF) is kicking off 2012 by launching a bold 5-Year Breakthrough Goal:

“To shorten the time to diagnose Sjogren's by 50% in 5 years!”

Sjogren's ("SHOW-grins") is the second most prevalent autoimmune disorder, striking as many as 4 million Americans with an estimated 3 million cases currently undiagnosed. Early diagnosis and treatment are important for preventing complications with Sjogren's. Unfortunately, reaching a diagnosis is often difficult and has been found to take an average of over 5 years from the onset of symptoms.

Steven Taylor, CEO of the SSF, says “We cannot sit on the sidelines and let those patients suffer any longer. That is why the SSF is taking action to ensure we do everything we can to increase awareness and help those patients yet to be diagnosed.”

Sjogren's is a systemic disease in which the body's immune system mistakenly attacks its own moisture producing glands. The hallmark symptoms are dry eyes and dry mouth, but fatigue, muscle and joint pain are also prominent symptoms. Serious manifestations can occur, such as life-threatening lung involvement, central nervous system complications and disorders of cognitive functioning. Nine out of ten patients are women with an average age of onset in the late 40's. However, Sjogren's can occur in all age groups, even in children.

Venus Williams, the tennis star who withdrew from the US open after announcing her Sjogren's diagnosis, stated that she had suffered with issues from Sjogren's for a while without being diagnosed. “Being diagnosed with Sjogren's was a huge relief because I finally knew what was happening with my body,” said Williams, illustrating one example of what a correct diagnosis means for Sjogren's sufferers.

With an aggressive timeline of actions and goals to accomplish ahead, the SSF believes this initiative will change the face of Sjogren's. “By getting more patients diagnosed, physicians will become more knowledgeable about Sjogren's and all patients will see a benefit from that,” states Taylor.

To find out more about the 5-Year Breakthrough Goal and how you can help, contact the SSF office at 1-800-475-6473 or visit their website, www.sjogrens.org.

****Arrangements can be made for interviews with local Sjogren's patients, healthcare professionals as well as Steven Taylor, CEO, of the Sjogren's Syndrome Foundation.****