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Contact Information:
Elizabeth Trocchio or Steven Taylor
Sjögren’s Syndrome Foundation
Direct Line: 301-530-4420, press 216
Fax: 301-530-4415
Email: etrocchio@sjogrens.org
Website: www.sjogrens.org

Venus Williams Steps Up for Sjögren’s Awareness

The Sjögren’s Syndrome Foundation (SSF) is excited to announce Venus Williams as the Honorary Chairperson of our Carroll Petrie Foundation Sjögren’s Awareness Ambassador Program. “Venus’ willingness to share her story makes her a great Awareness Ambassador. Her courage gives hope to many patients who live silently with Sjögren’s because of the lack of awareness around this disease. The SSF is thrilled to have her leading the charge as our Chairperson,” said Steven Taylor, SSF CEO.

Sjögren’s (“SHOW-grins”) 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 early 40s. However, Sjögren’s can occur in all age groups, even in children.

Sjögren’s 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 Sjögren’s. Unfortunately, reaching a diagnosis is often difficult and has been found to take an average of over 4.7 years from the onset of symptoms. Only when Sjögren’s is recognized as a serious disease will patients receive the care needed.

Venus, like many Sjögren’s patients, struggled with getting a proper diagnosis, which is why she wanted to be a voice for Sjögren’s. Awareness Ambassadors help to educate their community and local medical professionals about Sjögren’s and are the front lines for helping the Foundation achieve our 5-Year Breakthrough Goal: “To shorten the time to diagnose Sjögren’s by 50% in 5 years.”

Venus hopes you will join her and step up for Sjögren’s Awareness! “By becoming an Awareness Ambassador, you will be helping to increase awareness of Sjögren’s – a very important cause I have been working on since I was diagnosed in 2011. Please join with me as we make a difference in how Sjögren’s is perceived in both the medical field and general public.” – Venus Williams

The SSF also wants to recognize The Carroll Petrie Foundation whose generous grant, supporting the Awareness Ambassador program, will allow us to provide the materials and support needed to increase awareness in communities across the United States.

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