



HEALTHWELL  
FOUNDATION®

When health insurance is not enough.®

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**March 26, 2014**

**CONTACT:**  
Ginny Dunn  
240-632-5309  
[Ginny.Dunn@HealthWellFoundation.org](mailto:Ginny.Dunn@HealthWellFoundation.org)

## **URTICARIA FUND NOW OPEN AT HEALTHWELL FOUNDATION®**

**Gaithersburg, Md.** – March 26, 2014 – The HealthWell Foundation, an independent non-profit providing nationwide financial assistance to insured Americans with high out-of-pocket medication expenses, today announced the launch of a new fund to assist patients suffering from chronic idiopathic urticaria. The fund provides copayment assistance to eligible patients to help ease the burden of medical costs to treat the condition.

Urticaria is a condition that typically presents as hives that go away in a few hours. However, in some people, it can last for weeks with no single, identifiable trigger. In severe cases, it becomes a distressing and disabling condition. HealthWell’s fund was established to help patients with the more severe forms of the condition.

“Urticaria can be extremely distressing due to severe itching and red, swollen blotches, especially of the face, which may appear without warning,” said Nancy Carteron, M.D., HealthWell board member, rheumatologist, and autoimmune disease specialist at California Pacific Medical Center in San Francisco and Associate Clinical Professor at University of California San Francisco. “While some cases of urticaria may quickly disappear on their own, other patients may suffer for months and require ongoing treatment with steroids and anti-histamines. People with altered immune systems, such as those living with lupus or thyroid disease, may experience hives as a result of their condition, usually due to autoantibodies.”

Krista Zodet, HealthWell Foundation President commented on the fund, “At HealthWell, we are committed to total patient care and to treating the patient as a whole.

Thanks to the generosity of our donors, we will now be able to assist eligible patients with treatment costs of chronic idiopathic urticaria regardless of the cause, which is a testimony to that commitment.”

To determine eligibility and apply for assistance through HealthWell Foundation’s Chronic Idiopathic Urticaria Fund, visit the Foundation’s website at [www.HealthWellFoundation.org](http://www.HealthWellFoundation.org).

### **About Urticaria**

Urticaria is a condition that results in a reaction of the skin causing swollen, pale red hives. Urticaria can be acute, appearing suddenly as a result of an allergic or autoimmune reaction, and can last for hours, or up to one day before fading. Chronic idiopathic urticaria are hives lasting more than six weeks with no single, identifiable trigger. Severe, chronic urticaria is a distressing and disabling condition. There are a variety of possible causes for urticaria, including chronic autoimmune illnesses such as systemic lupus erythematosus, Sjögren's, thyroid disease, cancer, as well as medications, infection, food, heat or cold, or trauma to the skin.

The hives caused by urticaria can appear anywhere on the body and can vary in size (from a pencil eraser to a dinner plate), and may join together to form larger areas known as plaques. Urticaria is more common in females ages 20 to 40.

According to Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, there is currently no known way to permanently cure chronic idiopathic urticaria. Most cases are characterized by periodic flare-ups with symptom-free intervals between and most of the time, the urticaria will eventually "burn-out" and never come back, although this may not happen until many months or even years have passed. It is estimated that as many as 40-60% of people with chronic idiopathic urticaria have an autoimmune cause of their urticaria.

### **About the HealthWell Foundation**

The HealthWell Foundation® is an independent 501(c)(3) charitable organization that provides financial assistance to help cover the cost of prescription drug coinsurance, copayments and deductibles, and health insurance premiums. Since 2004, HealthWell has assisted more than

173,000 adults and children faced with medical emergencies, including chronic and life-altering illnesses. These patients have insurance, and yet cannot afford their part. For more information, visit [www.HealthWellFoundation.org](http://www.HealthWellFoundation.org).

# # #