

**MEDIA CONTACTS:**

Jennifer Messenger Heilbronner
503-517-3725
jmessenger@metgroup.com

Ginny Dunn
240-632-5309
ginny.dunn@healthwellfoundation.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 22, 2011

HealthWell Foundation® Launches Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (SLE) Fund

Copay Assistance Now Available to People Living with SLE

Gaithersburg, MD - The HealthWell Foundation,® a nonprofit organization providing financial assistance to insured patients facing a variety of chronic and life-altering illnesses, announces the launch of a new fund supporting treatment for Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (SLE), the most common form of lupus. The fund provides copayment assistance to people living with lupus who are burdened by high-cost medications. The Lupus Foundation of America estimates that there are approximately 1.5 million Americans affected by all forms of lupus with more than 16,000 new cases diagnosed each year.

Dr. Nancy Carteron, HealthWell board member and autoimmune disease specialist at California Pacific Medical Center in San Francisco and Associate Clinical Professor at University of California San Francisco commented, "For over 50 years, people with lupus have depended upon steroids and other therapies, which carry long-term side-effects. More targeted therapies are being developed leading to greater therapeutic options for individuals living with lupus. Copayment assistance, such as that given through the HealthWell Foundation, will ensure that qualified patients have improved access to these emerging treatment options."

"Critical to taking advantage of the latest therapeutic option for any disease is the ability to afford that option," said HealthWell Foundation President, Mary P. Sundeen. "As a direct result of the generosity of our donors, the HealthWell Foundation stands ready to reduce the cost-sharing obligations that many insured patients face when trying to access gold standard and recently approved medications." Ms. Sundeen continued, "Through HealthWell's newly launched lupus fund, numerous patients will now be able to access an array of medications, including the first new FDA-approved drug for SLE in 56 years. We look forward to working with patient advocacy groups to increase awareness of this fund and to reduce the financial burden of medication costs for people living with lupus."

Sandra C. Raymond, President and CEO of the Lupus Foundation of America commented, "People with lupus want and deserve the best possible medical treatment. Due to its complexity, lupus can be an expensive disease to manage. Financial limits should never stand in the way of quality treatment. The Lupus Foundation of America applauds the HealthWell Foundation for establishing a fund that provides people with lupus additional resources to access the newest treatment options."

HealthWell launched its first autoimmune disease fund in 2004 and currently manages autoimmune funds for rheumatoid arthritis, psoriatic arthritis, psoriasis, ankylosing spondylitis, associated vasculitis (ANCA) and Crohn's disease. The launch of the SLE Fund is a natural extension of HealthWell's operations and is designed to meet the growing demand for patients struggling with high treatment expenses. Application information for the SLE Fund, as well as information on making a financial donation to support this and other funds, can be found at www.HealthWellFoundation.org.

About Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (SLE)

SLE is a serious autoimmune disease where the body's immune system attacks and destroys healthy tissue. The disease can affect many parts of the body including the skin, heart, lungs, kidneys, brain, and joints. Common symptoms of lupus can present as swelling of the joint or joint pain, fever, chest pain, hair loss, light sensitivity, and fatigue. The Lupus Foundation of America estimates that there are approximately 1.5 million Americans affected by all forms of lupus with more than 16,000 new cases diagnosed each year. Lupus is most common in women of childbearing age (15-44), but can affect men, children and teenagers as well. For additional information, visit www.lupus.org.

About the HealthWell Foundation

Since 2004, the HealthWell Foundation® has helped more than 150,000 insured patients with chronic and life-altering illnesses meet their cost-sharing obligations for treatment. HealthWell is an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that provides financial assistance to cover the cost of prescription drug coinsurance, copayments and deductibles, health insurance premiums, and other select out-of-pocket health care costs. For more information, visit www.HealthWellFoundation.org.

#