



News Release

For more information call: Community Relations 410-543-7139

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Roger Follibout, Jr.
Jamie Houston

SEPTEMBER 30, 2009

#####

Peninsula Regional Medical Center And The ALS Association Join Forces To Create New ALS Clinic

A diagnosis of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), also known as Lou Gehrig's disease, can be devastating for patients and their families. They often feel overwhelmed by the enormity of this neurological disease, which causes progressive muscle weakness that will eventually lead to difficulty speaking, swallowing and even breathing. Nearly all of these families need help in managing the patient's complex, changing medical needs and in making difficult decisions about breathing and feeding assistance.

Now, Peninsula Regional Medical Center and the ALS Association DC/MD/VA chapter have joined forces to create the ALS Clinic at Peninsula Regional. This clinic will provide patients access to a multidisciplinary health care team including a neurologist, pulmonologist, gastroenterologist, nutritionist, psychiatrist, nurse and physical, occupational, speech and respiratory therapists. It will coordinate the patient's appointments so he or she will see the appropriate specialists and therapists in one visit instead of having to come back on several days, an increasingly difficult task as the disease progresses. The clinic will also integrate ALS support services into the patient's care plan.

"The ALS Clinic at Peninsula Regional is the only clinic of its kind in the region, and we are very excited to be able to offer this much needed service so close to home," said Sherry Singer, MS, CCC-SLP, a speech-language pathologist at the Medical Center who has been instrumental in creating the clinic. "Until now, patients had to travel across the Bay Bridge to have access to a clinic like this, something that is extremely difficult for most



News Release

For more information call: Community Relations 410-543-7139

ALS patients to do. By eliminating the need for lengthy travel, we're sure we can improve the quality of life for these patients and their families. ”

The ALS Clinic at Peninsula Regional will hold sessions every three months in its Outpatient Physical Medicine Department, located on the 3rd floor of the Medical Center. The first session will be held on Monday, November 2, 2009 from 11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Any patient with a confirmed diagnosis of ALS is welcome and most health insurance plans, as well as Medicare and Medicaid coverage, are accepted.

“ALS is a complicated illness that impacts the entire family, not just the patient. Because it is a progressive disease, the patient’s physical abilities and needs will continue to change,” said Rodney Layton, MD, a pulmonologist with the ALS Clinic at Peninsula Regional. “Patients and their families may be struggling with day-to-day challenges and may not be aware of the resources available to them as the disease progresses. The team approach and coordination of care among our medical team will certainly alleviate some of the burden.”

The ALS Association representative on the team, Teri Clayton, a licensed social worker, meets with patients and their families at the clinic and can accompany them as they meet with the health care team. She helps them understand the medical information and often makes follow-up home visits to see if they have questions or concerns about the care plan. “The patients and their families take the lead, but I’m here to support them,” said Clayton. “Because of our years of experience and funding through donations, the ALS Association is in a unique position to provide support for people with ALS and their families, and to anticipate their needs.”

In addition to the comprehensive health care patients will receive at the clinic, the ALS Association will provide additional resources such as specialized telephones and voice amplification equipment. People with ALS may be interested in assistance with sophisticated wheelchairs and complex computer programs to help with communication, so the association has a rehabilitation engineer who can consult on equipment use and set-up.



News Release

For more information call: Community Relations 410-543-7139

There are grants that can help pay for transportation, and the ALS Association also organizes support groups for patients and their families. The DC/MD/VA chapter has a library of video tapes, books and articles that families may find useful. Families can get information and support when making decisions about how to treat disease complications, such as difficulty eating, swallowing, breathing and lung infections.

“The ALS Clinic at Peninsula Regional is committed to helping people with ALS and their families meet the many challenges they face,” said Peggy Naleppa, President of Peninsula Regional Medical Center. “By combining the medical expertise of our outstanding team of specialists with the resources of the ALS Association, we believe this clinic will ensure state-of-the-art, comprehensive and compassionate care for ALS patients.”

ALS is the most common motor neuron disease among adults. An estimated 30,000 people in the United States have ALS. About 5,000 people are diagnosed each year. The disease attacks the pathways and nerve cells that send signals from the brain to the spinal cord and muscles. There is no known cause and no cure. Life expectancy for people with ALS is three to five years.

For more information about the ALS Clinic at Peninsula Regional Medical Center, please call the Outpatient Physical Medicine department at 410-543-7069. To schedule an appointment with the Clinic, call 410-543-7700 Monday through Friday between 7:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.

###