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SOUTH CAROLINA NON-PROFIT LAUNCHES NATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO TACKLE FATAL HEART PROBLEMS

Public awareness campaign to highlight fainting link to heart health

HILTON HEAD, S.C., – RELEASE DATE EMBARGO: October 19, 2011, 0:01am

Fainting affects an estimated one million people in the United States each year,¹ a national survey released today by STARS, a local patient advocacy group, shows that one in two Americans are unaware that fainting can signal a potentially fatal heart condition. Most Americans rank dehydration, exhaustion and stress as the leading causes of fainting. Yet, in many cases, fainting is the only sign of an abnormal heart rhythm that causes sudden cardiac arrest – a devastating condition that kills more than 250,000 people each year.²

Launched today, the ‘STARS Fainting Checklist’ is designed to help patients and doctors reach the correct diagnosis following a fainting episode. The Checklist is a central component of ‘Take Fainting to Heart’ a national public educational effort which highlights the link between fainting and heart disorders, stressing the importance of discussing any fainting episode with a doctor, to rule out a dangerous underlying heart condition.

“STARS is proud to participate in this innovative educational campaign to spotlight the seriousness of fainting and its real health impact,” said Trudie Lobban, Founder and CEO of STARS. “As part of our Hilton Head-based campaign, new information and interactive resources are available at www.STARS-US.org to help people take fainting to heart. We encourage you to download the ‘STARS Fainting Checklist’ to help you and your doctor work towards a correct diagnosis.”

Fainting, also referred to medically as syncope, is a sudden, temporary loss of consciousness that occurs when there is a sudden lack of blood supply to the brain. It accounts for one to six percent of hospital admissions³ and approximately one percent of visits to the emergency room per year.³⁻⁵ While many causes of fainting are otherwise harmless, others may be life threatening, when caused by an underlying heart rhythm disorder.

According to the survey results released today, even though a majority of Americans (76 percent) have fainted themselves or know someone who has fainted, only 36 percent were aware that fainting requires immediate medical attention.⁶ It is, then, no surprise that many people don't have the faintest idea of what caused them to pass out:

- One-third of Americans did nothing after they fainted
- Less than half reported talking to a physician
- Less than a quarter underwent any kind of medical testing

“Fainting could be a symptom of a more serious issue, and should not be taken lightly,” said Dr. Nicholas Tullo, Cardiac Electrophysiologist at Consultants in Cardiology in West Orange, New Jersey. “Getting to the root cause of an individual’s fainting is the first and most important step in ruling out a serious, potentially life-threatening heart condition. Certain advanced diagnostic tests, such as insertable cardiac monitors, can quickly determine whether a person’s fainting is due to an underlying heart condition and provide physicians with pertinent information needed to treat the problem.”

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For more information on Take Fainting to Heart, visit www.STARS-US.org to access information and interactive tools, gain insight from medical experts and hear compelling stories about people’s personal experiences with fainting.

About Take Fainting to Heart

Take Fainting to Heart aims to educate Americans about the important link between fainting and heart health. The campaign encourages people who have fainted to visit their doctor to determine if it is caused by an underlying, serious health problem. A number of educational resources are available at www.STARS-US.org, including an “ask-the-expert” feature, a downloadable checklist to take to a doctor’s visit and compelling stories of how patients took control of their fainting. Similar educational tools, along with additional information about fainting and its link to heart health are also available at www.Fainting.com.

About the Survey

These results are based on a survey conducted by Kelton Research in September 2011. A total of 1,082 people responded to the survey. Quotas are set to ensure reliable and accurate representation of the total U.S. population ages 18 and over.

About Stars

Syncope Trust And Reflex anoxic Seizures (STARS www.stars-us.org) is the leading non-profit organization providing information and support to individuals, families and medical professionals on syncope. STARS provides information and support from diagnosis through to treatment and long term management of syncope for all age groups.

About Reaching a Correct Diagnosis

To ensure a proper diagnosis and treatment, Take Fainting to Heart aims to empower people who have experienced a fainting episode to take the following steps and find out why:

- Discuss your fainting with a doctor and provide an accurate history of your previous episodes.
- Ask if you should see a heart rhythm specialist, such as a cardiologist or electrophysiologist, for further diagnostic testing. A heart rhythm specialist may prescribe an insertable cardiac monitor (ICM), which records the heart's activity over long periods of time to help determine whether the fainting is caused by an abnormal heart rhythm.
 - According to a recent study, patients who had fainted were evaluated by an average of three different specialists and underwent an average of 13 tests without providing a conclusive diagnosis. These findings suggest that an ICM implanted earlier in the evaluation process could result in a more efficient diagnosis.⁷

Forrest Finch, a paramedic in Alton, Ill., experienced a fainting episode while driving an ambulance, which resulted in an accident. "My doctor suspected that the fainting was related to a heart issue and his suspicion was quickly confirmed by an ICM. After being diagnosed, I was placed on a treatment plan that has kept my heart rhythm in check ever since."

¹ <http://www.hrsonline.org/patientinfo/symptomsdiagnosis/fainting/>

² <http://www.sca-aware.org/about-sca>

³ Kappor W.N. Am J Med. 1991 ; 90 ; 91-106

⁴ Brignole M, et al. Europace. 2003 ; 5 :293-298.

⁵ Blanc J-J, et al. Eur Heart J. 2002 ;23 :815-820.

⁶ Take Fainting to Heart Survey, Kelton Research. September 2011.

⁷ Edvardsson, N, et al. Use of an implantable loop recorder to increase the diagnostic yield in unexplained syncope: results from the PICTURE registry. EP Europace. 2011; 13(2): 262-269 (first published online on Nov. 19, 2010)