



Health Awareness

Dispelling Common Myths About Asthma With World Champion Swimmer Peter Vanderkaay

(NAPSA)—**Myth:** People with asthma shouldn't play sports. **Fact:** As a world-class swimmer with asthma, Peter Vanderkaay is living proof that having asthma doesn't mean a life of sitting on the sidelines. This is just one of the myths that Vanderkaay, a member of the world-record-breaking U.S. 4x200-meter freestyle relay team in 2004, wants to help dispel through ASTHMyths, an online resource for people and parents of children with asthma (www.asthmyths.com).

Vanderkaay started swimming competitively when he was 7 and was diagnosed with asthma when he was 10. He is among the 20 million Americans, including about 6.4 million children, who are affected by asthma. Asthma is a chronic disease, meaning that even if patients do not have symptoms all of the time, their asthma is still there.

"The diagnosis came as a shock," Vanderkaay said. "But with support from my family, doctors, coaches and friends, I have been able to manage my asthma and pursue my dreams." Raising awareness about asthma control is what Vanderkaay is hoping to do with ASTHMyths.

ASTHMyths.com is a Web site developed by Merck & Co., Inc. and is specifically designed to help educate people with the condition about some of the myths and facts of asthma. For example:

• **Myth:** Asthma can be cured.

Fact: There is no cure for asthma, but people can help prevent symptoms by speaking with their doctors so they can participate more in the activities they enjoy.



• **Myth:** No symptoms means no asthma.

Fact: Even if people do not have symptoms every day, their asthma is there every day. By partnering with their doctor, people can learn about their triggers, and about the treatment that's right for them so that they can enjoy a more active and healthy lifestyle.

• **Myth:** Asthma is a phase that some people can outgrow.

Fact: Once someone has asthma, he or she always has it. But asthma doesn't have to stop people from working towards achieving their goals.

The Web site discusses the facts about the disease, the importance of talking to a doctor and understanding the myths vs. facts about asthma.

"It is important for families living with asthma to understand the disease, know their asthma triggers, and realize what they can do to help control their

asthma," said Dr. Randall Brown, M.D., MPH, Research Director and Partner at Georgia Pediatric Pulmonology Associates and Adjunct Associate Professor of Health Behavior and Health Education at the University of Michigan School of Public Health. "ASTHMyths.com offers tools and information about asthma which, in my view as a clinician and asthma researcher, clearly allow a better understanding of the disease—enabling a better conversation between the patient, family and physician about optimal asthma control."

ASTHMyths.com includes useful facts, tools and information such as:

- Information about the myths vs. facts of asthma;
- An asthma symptom tracker;
- A checklist to determine whether a daycare or school is asthma friendly;
- A step-by-step Asthma Action Plan that can be developed together with a doctor.

Also included in ASTHMyths.com is a "Poolside with Peter" section where visitors can track Vanderkaay's progress and training as he prepares for the biggest swimming event of the year that will take place this summer in China.

Vanderkaay hopes that his story will encourage others like him to keep their asthma under control in order to continue working towards achieving their goals.

To learn more about Vanderkaay's experience and get additional facts about asthma, visit www.asthmyths.com.