

SEPTEMBER 19, 2006 - The Preeclampsia Foundation has entered into a formal alliance with the March of Dimes, pledging to help the organization with its Prematurity Campaign. The campaign is a multi-year effort to communicate prematurity awareness and educational messages and work toward reducing the rate of premature birth. Dubbed a “silent crisis” by the March of Dimes, prematurity is on the rise and now affects one out of every eight babies born in the United States. Preeclampsia, a hypertensive disorder of pregnancy affecting an estimated 5 to 8 percent of pregnancies, is one of the leading causes of premature birth since the only known treatment for the disorder is delivery of the baby. Frequently, this means delivering a premature baby. Almost half of all premature births are from unknown causes; the leading known cause—accounting for at least 11-12% of all premature births—is from preeclampsia and other hypertensive disorders of pregnancy.

“The alarming statistics on preeclampsia and premature birth speak for themselves, and we are thrilled to ally ourselves with the March of Dimes in an effort to increase awareness, education and research,” says Eleni Tsigas, Chair of the Preeclampsia Foundation. “Preeclampsia and resulting premature birth have had devastating consequences for a countless number of families in this country, and we must continue to fight until this disorder no longer robs mothers and babies of a healthy pregnancy and birth.”

According to the March of Dimes, prematurity has been escalating steadily and alarmingly over the past two decades. Between 1981 and 2003, the rate of premature births rose from 9.4 percent to 12.3, an increase of almost 31 percent. Every year nearly 500,000 infants are born prematurely. Preeclampsia is responsible for more than 80,000 premature births, and incidence of the disorder has risen 40% in the last decade—however, according to the World Health Organization, prenatal conditions rank second from the bottom in National Institutes of Health (NIH) funding.

“We’re very pleased that the Preeclampsia Foundation has signed on as an alliance member of our Prematurity Campaign,” says Stephen Abelman, Manager of Alliance Development for the March of Dimes. “The March of Dimes is committed to reducing the rising premature birth rates in this country, and since preeclampsia is the single largest cause of clinically indicated premature births, it is only natural that we should work together. We are certain that the Preeclampsia Foundation will be a great partner and resource and look forward to collaborating on future projects.”

In addition to the Preeclampsia Foundation, other March of Dimes Prematurity Campaign alliance members include organizations such as the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, Sidelines National Support Network and the Association of Women’s Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses.

