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New USAID Grant Helps Georgetown Meet Unmet Family Planning Needs Worldwide

Washington, D.C. – Building upon two decades of developing highly effective, easy-to-use fertility awareness-based methods of family planning and introducing them worldwide, the Institute for Reproductive Health (IRH) at Georgetown University Medical Center has been awarded a five-year, \$38 million grant by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to expand access to these methods and ensure their sustainability in developing countries. USAID has been funding the Institute since 1985.

IRH is an international leader in the development of fertility awareness-based methods of family planning, also known as natural family planning. The Institute conducts research, builds service-delivery capacity, and works with a wide range of local partners in 28 countries, including the United States.

More than 500,000 women worldwide, including 50,000 in the U.S., now use Institute developed family planning methods. These methods include the Standard Days Method® (95 percent effective) and the Two Day Method® (96 percent effective) as well as the Lactational Amenorrhea Method (98 percent effective). With the new USAID support, an additional 2.5 million women in Asia and Africa will be exposed to the Georgetown methods, according to Victoria Jennings, Ph.D., director of the Institute for Reproductive Health and principal investigator on the grant. Dr. Jennings is a professor of obstetrics & gynecology at Georgetown University Medical Center.

“This funding from USAID gives Georgetown University a wonderful opportunity to continue to help reduce the unmet need for family planning in developing countries. Millions of women currently don’t use any form of family planning although they have no wish to become pregnant. Many women want a way to control fertility that doesn’t involve medications or devices that might affect their health,” said Dr. Jennings. “They most often do this for personal preferences, though some are attracted to these methods for religious or cultural reasons. The natural family planning methods we have developed are at least as effective for preventing pregnancy as a number of other widely used methods of family planning.”

The Standard Days Method, which uses CycleBeads®, a string of 32 color-coded beads to help a woman keep track of her cycle, know which days she can get pregnant (days 8-19 represented by glow-in-the-dark white beads) and monitor the length of her menstrual

cycle, identifies the 12-day "fertile window" of a woman's menstrual cycle. Users of the TwoDay Method check for vaginal secretions that indicate ovulation to know when they are fertile. The Lactational Amenorrhea Method helps women establish optimal breastfeeding and utilize the infertility provided by this practice to avoid pregnancy during the first six postpartum months before transitioning to another method. They are the only natural methods of family planning that have been clinically tested and introduced on an international scale in more than 25 years.

“This new grant from USAID allows us to continue our emphasis on translating research into improved reproductive health for women and their partners. With this funding we will be able to help millions by continuing to develop sustainable, accessible, high-quality fertility awareness services,” Dr. Jennings said.

About the U.S. Agency for International Development: The U.S. Agency for International Development administers the U.S. foreign assistance program providing economic and humanitarian assistance in more than 120 countries worldwide.

Note to editors: To download a high resolution photo of CycleBeads go to:
https://gushare.georgetown.edu/xythoswfs/webui/xy-3344068_2-t_5NKOMyWv

About the Institute for Reproductive Health

The Institute for Reproductive Health is dedicated to helping women and men make informed choices about family planning and providing them with simple and effective natural options. As part of Georgetown University's Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, the Institute conducts research to develop natural methods of family planning and tests them in service delivery settings.

About Georgetown University Medical Center

Georgetown University Medical Center is an internationally recognized academic medical center with a three-part mission of research, teaching and patient care (through our partnership with MedStar Health). Our mission is carried out with a strong emphasis on public service and a dedication to the Catholic, Jesuit principle of cura personalis – or "care of the whole person." The Medical Center includes the School of Medicine and the School of Nursing and Health Studies, both nationally ranked, the world-renowned Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center and the Biomedical Graduate Research Organization.

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