



American Association of
HEALTH PLANS

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 21, 2003

Contact: Susan Pisano
(202) 778-3245

NFL STAR ROBERTO GARZA TEAMS WITH AAHP, ADA ON BI-LINGUAL DIABETES EDUCATION CAMPAIGN

Campaign Aims to Prevent Many of the 82,000 Amputations Due to Diabetes Each Year

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) – “Check Your Feet!” That is the advice millions of Americans with diabetes will soon be getting in television, radio, and print public service announcements (PSAs) created by the American Association of Health Plans (AAHP) and the American Diabetes Association (ADA). The PSAs, featuring Roberto Garza, starting center for the Atlanta Falcons of the National Football League (NFL), will be distributed in English and in Spanish beginning this week in markets across the country.

AAHP and ADA kicked off the PSA campaign at an event today on Capitol Hill attended by Bush Administration officials and members of the Congressional Diabetes and Hispanic Caucuses. In this spirit, several “kicked off” their shoes and socks and joined in a demonstration of proper foot care for people with diabetes.

“We are proud to join Roberto Garza of the NFL’s Atlanta Falcons, leaders in the Administration and the Congress, and our partner, the ADA in a broad-based effort to encourage people with diabetes to get and practice proper foot care,” said AAHP President Karen Ignagni. “America’s health plans are committed to this goal, and are encouraging stations all over the country to broadcast an important message to their Spanish- and English-speaking audiences.”

Up to 85% of 82,000 amputations associated with diabetes in the U.S. each year could be prevented with proper foot care. The PSA campaign is part of a long-term AAHP/ADA initiative, “Taking on Diabetes,” that involves 300 health plans nationwide.

Garza’s commitment stems from family experience, including that of his grandfather, who recently lost part of his foot to the disease. Knowing that diabetes is quite prevalent among Spanish-speaking Americans, he sought an organization that is involved in bilingual diabetes education and offered to donate his services to the planned PSA campaign. Both the NFL and the Atlanta Falcons are posting the PSAs to their respective web sites.

“This campaign represents the next phase of an ambitious project started by AAHP and ADA to reduce the terrible complications associated with diabetes,” said ADA President Francine Kaufman, M.D. “It has been proven that proper foot care can reduce the risk of amputation in people with diabetes dramatically. Our goal is to see that that knowledge is put into practice on a consistent basis for people with diabetes across the country,” she said.

“I believe that if my grandfather had this information, it would have made a difference for him,” said Garza. “I want to use my position to help others avoid what happened in my family.”

There are approximately 11 million people in the United States diagnosed with diabetes. Their risk of a leg amputation is 15-40 times greater than the risk for people without diabetes.

ABOUT THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF HEALTH PLANS

www.aahp.org

The American Association of Health Plans (AAHP) is the national trade organization representing health plans that provide health care coverage to more than 170 million Americans.

ABOUT THE AMERICAN DIABETES ASSOCIATION

www.diabetes.org

The American Diabetes Association is the nation's leading non-profit health organization providing diabetes research, information and advocacy. The mission of the organization is to prevent and cure diabetes and to improve the lives of all people affected by diabetes. You can call the American Diabetes Association at 1-800-DIABETES (1-800-342-2383).

ABOUT ROBERTO GARZA

Roberto Garza has played for the Atlanta Falcons as a starting offensive lineman since 2001. Garza was named a little college All-America first-team selection and an All-Lone Star Conference performer at center as a senior. Garza graduated from Texas A&M – Kingsville and is a native of Rio Hondo, Texas.

ABOUT “TAKING ON DIABETES”

The AAHP/ADA joint initiative, *Taking on Diabetes*, represents a nationwide, long-term commitment to improve the lives of people with diabetes by dramatically reducing the terrible consequences of the disease. *Taking on Diabetes* is supported by an unrestricted educational grant from GlaxoSmithKline. For More Information visit www.takingondiabetes.org.

###

Check Your Feet!

What To Do If You Have Diabetes:

Wear roomy soft-soled shoes; always wear clean socks; do not go barefoot. *Helps prevent infections.*

Do not cross your legs when sitting. *Keeps the blood flowing to your feet.*

Use lotion (but not between your toes) to keep your skin soft and smooth. *Helps prevent blisters and sores.*

Properly care for your toenails. *Ask your doctor for instructions.*

Call your doctor if you notice blisters, sores or if your feet change color, shape, or just feel different. *Treat problems early.*

Take your shoes and socks off every time you visit your doctor. *Make sure your physician checks your feet at every visit.*

CHECK YOUR FEET EVERY DAY.