



## **Oral Cancer Foundation to Donate Screening Devices to Free Clinics**

*Phoenix's Native American Community Health Center Is First Recipient of adjunctive screening system*

NEWPORT BEACH, Calif., Oct. 5 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- The Oral Cancer Foundation recently initiated a program of donating VELscope® Oral Cancer Screening Systems to free clinics and others located in, and helping communities with, underserved populations. The first recipient of this program is the Native American Community Health Center, commonly known as Native Health, in Phoenix, Arizona, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

According to Oral Cancer Foundation executive director Brian Hill, "Our intent is to identify free clinics and health service providers in areas that have a high concentration of people who are both at risk for oral cancer and without the financial means to pay for comprehensive oral exams." The Foundation is also careful to ensure that any clinic receiving aid in the form of equipment and materials has at least one dentist on staff that is regularly present to see patients.

Native Health's Dental Director, Dr. Mahasin Hangalay, believes it would be hard to find an area with a greater need for regular oral cancer screenings. "The Native American community that we serve has the highest rate of tobacco usage of any major demographic group in the country," she said, "as well as an extremely high poverty rate and very poor access to health care." The doctor also noted that because of the reported link between oral cancer and the sexually transmitted human papilloma virus, screenings at the clinic are not just provided to tobacco users, but also to all patients aged 16 or older. Opportunistic screenings of the entire patient population will yield the best possible outcomes.

Dr. Hangalay is particularly happy that the Oral Cancer Foundation chose to award Native Health a device which uses tissue fluorescence as its core scientific platform. "There are other screening products out there, but the value of this science has been well documented in many studies," she said. "While I am currently doing thorough visual and tactile screenings which have proven to be highly valuable in finding early disease states, tissue fluorescence helps me see things not readily visible to the naked eye."

The VELscope system is the first adjunctive screening device cleared by the FDA to help dental practitioners discover cancerous, precancerous and other lesions that might not be apparent to the naked eye. The tissue fluorescence visualization platform on which the VELscope technology is based is supported by over \$50 million in research funded by the National Institutes of Health and other respected institutions. The Oral Cancer Foundation purchased numerous VELscope systems at a special price agreed to by the device's manufacturer, LED Dental. The funding that made this effort possible came from the Bruce Paltrow Oral Cancer Fund, OCF's long-time partner in working to bring down the death rate from this disease.

LED Dental's CEO, Dr. Ralph Green, personally trained Dr. Hangalay on the use of the VELscope system. "For many years Native Health has performed a very valuable service to the Phoenix community, and we are pleased and proud that our VELscope system will play a part in the expansion of that effort," said Dr. Green. "We are very confident that our system will help discover oral cancer at earlier and even pre-cancerous stages, when treatment is much less invasive, less costly and more successful." Native Health's CEO, Richard Zephier, said, "We recently conducted a needs assessment that identified a significant demand for increased dental

services. Now, thanks to the generosity of the Oral Cancer Foundation and the Bruce Paltrow Fund, we will be able to make a significant step toward addressing that need, and to change how the community views our dental program.

Over the next ten months, the Oral Cancer Foundation plans to donate twelve of the \$7,000 devices to free clinics in both inner cities and rural areas that fit the profile of containing both high risk populations, and communities underserved in health care.

About the Oral Cancer Foundation: The Oral Cancer Foundation, founded by oral cancer survivor Brian R. Hill, is a non-profit 501(c)(3) public service charity that provides information, patient support, sponsorship of research, and advocacy related to this disease. It maintains a Web site at <http://www.oralcancer.org>, which receives millions of hits per month. At the forefront of this year's agenda is the drive to promote solid awareness in the minds of the American public about the need to undergo an annual oral cancer screening, and an outreach to the dental community to provide this service as a matter of routine practice. Supporting the foundation's goals is a scientific advisory board composed of leading cancer authorities from varied medical and dental specialties, and from prominent cancer educational, treatment, and research institutions in the United States.

About the Bruce Paltrow Oral Cancer Fund: The Bruce Paltrow Oral Cancer Fund is a collaboration with the Paltrow family, represented by actress Blythe Danner (Paltrow) and her children, actress Gwyneth Paltrow, director/producer Jake Paltrow, and the Oral Cancer Foundation. Designed to be used with a focus on populations in the US where disparities in healthcare exist, the fund not only memorializes producer / director Bruce Paltrow who was lost to oral cancer in 2002, but also continues his vision of helping others less privileged.

About The Native Health Clinic: Native Health's mission is to continually strive to improve the lives of Native American families in the greater Phoenix area by providing unique, high quality, culturally competent health-related services that enhance the well-being of the whole person and the Native American community. Each year, Native Health serves approximately 12,000 patients who make a total of over 68,000 visits to the clinic.

SOURCE The Oral Cancer Foundation