



News Release

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COELIAC UK LAUNCH RESEARCH FUND TO CHANGE THE FUTURE FOR PEOPLE WITH COELIAC DISEASE AND GLUTEN RELATED AUTOIMMUNE CONDITIONS

Coeliac UK, the largest independent charity for people who need to live gluten free, this week launches a research fund and accompanying fundraising appeal, aiming to raise £5 million to change the future for people with coeliac disease and gluten related autoimmune conditions.

The research appeal is being headed up by Coeliac UK's patron, actor Caroline Quentin who was diagnosed with the autoimmune disease three years ago. It will boost research efforts into key areas identified and agreed by patients, carers and healthcare professionals. The full list can be found here www.coeliac.org.uk/researchfund.

With the charity celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, there is a greater urgency to find better answers to the disease, which has links to other autoimmune conditions such as Type 1 diabetes and autoimmune thyroid disease and still relies on the gluten free diet as its only treatment.

Sarah Sleet, chief executive of Coeliac UK said: "It is possible through further research, that finding the answers to coeliac disease could enable answers to other devastating autoimmune conditions such as Type 1 diabetes. With more people being diagnosed with coeliac disease each year and with new health complications emerging, it is critical that we make the commitment now to change the status quo and make coeliac disease research everyone's priority."

A video was produced as part of the appeal launch to show the impact of the disease on those affected and can be viewed here www.coeliac.org.uk/researchfund. The video shows the various presentations of coeliac disease including refractory coeliac disease type 2 (which is not responsive to the gluten free diet), osteoporosis and gluten ataxia.

The Fund has already received an injection of £500k from Innovate UK, the UK's innovation agency, which in addition to £250k from the charity, will support a new research competition. Match funding will draw in a further £250k from industry making the first £1 million available from the Fund.

Dr Ian Campbell, Director of Ageing Society, Health and Nutrition, Innovate UK said: “It’s fantastic to be working with charities such as Coeliac UK to promote innovations that will have a real, positive impact on people’s lives.”

Coeliac UK has already committed over £2 million to research projects since 2005 including ground breaking discoveries such as identifying genes associated with coeliac disease and other autoimmune conditions related to gluten. And also funded research towards a vaccine to restore immune tolerance to gluten.

“50 years ago little was known about coeliac disease and the gluten free diet, bread used to come in a tin and people wrongly thought children would grow out of the autoimmune disease. Fast forward to today and both the disease and the diet are firmly on the worldwide map and 150,000 diagnosed people in the UK now live a better way of life thanks to improved recognition and diagnosis. However, half a million people remain undiagnosed and we need more support to help them get diagnosed and managing their condition with a gluten free diet. But, we also know that there needs to be a more permanent solution to this complex disease so we are boosting our research efforts and awareness raising as part of our 50th anniversary activities,” Ms Sleet said.

Coeliac UK is the national charity for people who need to live without gluten, whether due to coeliac disease or another medical condition requiring a gluten free diet. Coeliac disease is a serious autoimmune condition caused by a reaction to gluten, a protein found in wheat, barley and rye. People diagnosed with coeliac disease must maintain a strict gluten free diet for the rest of their life if they are to avoid very serious complications such as osteoporosis, infertility and although rare, small bowel cancer.

Donate today at: www.coeliac.org.uk/researchfund.

Ends

For more information or interviews please contact
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Notes to editor

Diary Date: **Coeliac UK’s Awareness Week Monday 14 – 20 May 2018.**

- Coeliac disease is a serious illness where the body’s immune system reacts to gluten found in food, making the body attack itself.
- 1 in 100 people in the UK has coeliac disease
- Average time to diagnosis is 13 years.
- 1 in 4 people diagnosed with coeliac disease had previously been diagnosed with IBS.
- Gluten is a protein found in wheat (including spelt), rye and barley. Some people are also sensitive to oats. Obvious sources of gluten include breads, pastas, flours, cereals, cakes and biscuits. It is often used as an ingredient in many favourite foods such as fish fingers, sausages, gravies, sauces and soy sauce.
- Coeliac UK has a Helpline on 0333 332 2033 and further information can be found at www.coeliac.org.uk