

FOUNDATION STARTED FOR WOMEN WHO SUFFER FROM
SEVERE ILLNESS DURING PREGNANCY
Devastating illness for moms'-to-be in need of research to save lives

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Dallas, Texas (June, 2003) -- A severe illness which forces many pregnant women to be hospitalized, and leads as many as 25% of these women to terminate their pregnancies out of fear for their own lives now has a foundation for research and education of the illness.

This devastating illness is called Hyperemesis Gravidurum (HG) and the cause is unknown. In addition to termination, HG is so debilitating that thousands of families are terrified to endure another pregnancy since HG very often recurs.

Women who suffer from this illness frequently require extensive and expensive medical care, or even multiple hospitalizations due to severe vomiting, starvation, and dehydration. Additional symptoms include dangerous weight loss from an inability to eat or drink; and physical and emotional exhaustion that leaves many unable to care for their families or themselves.

“Almost every woman I hear from around the world is terrified of enduring the misery of HG again. Most also greatly fear hurting their unborn child when they receive medical care. The lack of understanding from medical practitioners, caregivers, and insurance providers often delays or restricts their treatment options, which increases their stress and suffering. Sadly, this may affect their health or that of their unborn child’s in the future,” said Kimber McGibbon RN, hyperemesis survivor and founder of hyperemesis.org (a Web site dedicated to those women and families who endure the illness).

“When people think of pregnancy, they think of eating pickles and ice cream and the joys of preparing for a new baby. For hyperemesis women, the smell of pickles and ice cream, let alone any food, may cause them to vomit violently, and the joy of pregnancy is virtually non-existent,” said Ann Marie King, co-founder of the HER foundation and survivor of hyperemesis.

Mrs. King’s hyperemesis resulted in the loss of more than 20 pounds during her first trimester. She was hospitalized numerous times during her pregnancy and had a feeding tube inserted during her fourth month in order to sustain her unborn child’s life. While severely emaciated and unable to drink even a sip of water during her entire nine months, Mrs. King feared for her own life many times during her pregnancy. “If I heard one more person tell me to just eat a cracker I thought I would scream,” said King.

Hyperemesis is an illness that can be quite challenging to a marriage. It requires husbands to play a critical support role in their wives’ day-to-day fight against HG. Jeremy King,

husband of Ann Marie said, “Although I never left my wife’s side during her pregnancy, it became painfully clear to me that even I could not truly understand what she was going through. Only those women who have endured this horrible illness can grasp the depths of frustration and despair. “That is why the Web site is so important because it allows families and friends to better understand the illness and what their loved ones are going through. HG is not simply your typical first trimester nausea.”

The HER Foundation, formerly the Hyperemesis Education and Research Organization, just launched its official, new website (www.hyperemesis.org or www.HelpHER.org) which gives health professionals, women and their families information on the illness, along with support groups and doctors who have had experience treating those who suffer from HG. Many doctors today are not aware of the criteria and treatments for HG, causing these women to feel helpless and giving some no choice but to terminate their pregnancies out of fear for their own lives.

The HER Foundation is a non-profit organization (501c3) dedicated to educating others about the diagnosis and management of Hyperemesis Gravidarum. It conducts global polls and surveys to learn more about the victims of HG and the treatment they receive. It is the HER Foundation’s goal to increase awareness of available medical care and the potentially devastating consequences of HG if left untreated. As funding becomes available, the HER Foundation will seek research proposals aimed at improving the care of these women. The official Web site can be found at www.hyperemesis.org or www.HelpHER.org.