



HCI announce major Global Sponsorship Agreement with Novartis Medical Nutrition starting 2005

February 2005, HCI Headquarters, St. Charles, Illinois:

HCI is pleased to announce that Novartis Medical Nutrition, a unit of Novartis Consumer Health S.A., has agreed to be the sole Medical Nutrition sponsor of the recently established Healthcare Caterers International (HCI), for an initial five-year global agreement.

Under the agreement, Novartis Medical Nutrition will provide sponsorship funding and expertise to enable HCI to implement its core aim of information, best practice and knowledge sharing amongst the group's 20,000 members across the USA, Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom. In addition to this core aim, the level of funding agreed will provide HCI with the ability to assist member organizations with common education, training and recruitment initiatives that will not only benefit their members, but will seek to improve healthcare catering provision and ultimately, benefit patients in each respective country.

As the second largest supplier of medical and health nutrition products worldwide, one of the core aims of Novartis Medical Nutrition is to inform, educate and establish wider usage of medical nutrition products amongst healthcare professionals. Novartis Medical Nutrition's extensive portfolio of healthcare foodservice products encompasses specialist product ranges for the treatment of conditions such as disease related malnutrition, dysphagia and bowel disorders.

Healthcare Caterers International was formed in July 2004, when senior representatives and Chairpersons from six major national healthcare catering associations met and agreed to become active members. The six founding member organizations are:

- Canadian Society of Nutrition Management, Canada.
- Dietary Managers Association, USA.
- Hospital Caterers Association, UK.
- Institute of Hospitality in Healthcare Limited, Australia
- Meals On Wheels Association of America, USA.
- National Association of Care Catering, UK.

Currently, HCI is chaired by Colleen Zenk (a former Chair of the DMA, USA), vice-chaired by Alison McCree (current Chair of the Hospital Caterers Association, UK) and administered by William St. John (current CEO of the DMA) as Executive Officer.

Each founding organization is represented on the board by its respective national representative or President. Additionally, HCI plans to expand its presence around the globe, via invitation to associations similar to current members and to assist in the establishment of such groups in regions where they currently do not exist.

One of the first initiatives that the sponsorship agreement will support is the development of online communication through the association's website www.hciglobal.org. This will enable all members to access a reference library & bookstore of global materials, discuss issues via 'chat' areas, and post information.

HCI Chair, Colleen Zenk, believes the global co-operation between members will make a real difference to patient care; 'we're made up of over 20,000 healthcare catering experts! Each individual has something to offer, so if we can create an active sharing of information, knowledge and best practice, I am positive that this will benefit patients. Nutrition is top of the agenda in nearly all healthcare institutions; if we adopt the team approach that's core to the beliefs of HCI, it really can make a difference.'

Website - <http://www.hciglobal.org>

Images to accompany this release are available on request.