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ABUMRAD NAMED ATKINS PROFESSOR OF OBESITY RESEARCH

St. Louis, MO – November 30, 2004 – Nada A. Abumrad, Ph.D., has been named the first Dr. Robert C. Atkins Professor of Medicine and Obesity Research at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis. The professorship has been made possible by a gift from the Dr. Robert C. Atkins Foundation.

Mark S. Wrighton, chancellor of the University, and Larry Shapiro, M.D., executive vice chancellor for medical affairs and dean of the School of Medicine, announced the creation of the new professorship and Abumrad's appointment to the position.

“We are extremely grateful for the generosity of Mrs. Veronica Atkins and the Atkins Foundation in establishing the Dr. Robert C. Atkins Professorship in Medicine and Obesity Research,” Wrighton says. “Endowments like this one have a lasting impact on the University's ability to attract and retain outstanding faculty, and this professorship, in particular, helps address a growing problem that is robbing millions of Americans of good health.”

“This professorship will allow our already outstanding efforts in obesity and nutrition research to continue and grow. It will help strengthen Washington University's position as a major center for nutrition and obesity research and treatment,” Shapiro says.

Abumrad will be officially named the Atkins professor at a ceremony taking place today. The Atkins chair is the first professorship in the United States specifically devoted to supporting the study of obesity. Abumrad studies fatty acid transport and its role in diabetes, atherosclerosis and obesity. She is exploring the role of a cell membrane protein that she was the first to identify as a facilitator of fatty acid uptake in fat utilization, energy balance and predisposition to metabolic diseases.

Samuel Klein, M.D., the William H. Danforth Professor of Medicine and Nutritional Science, chief of the Division of Geriatrics and Nutritional Science and director of the Center for Human Nutrition, says the Atkins professorship will allow Abumrad to devote herself to the study of cellular metabolic alterations associated with obesity.

“Obesity is a major public health problem in the United States, and is responsible for more than 300,000 deaths and over \$100 billion in health-care costs each year,” Klein says. “Dr. Abumrad's research will help us understand the fundamental, cellular mechanisms that can explain why obesity causes metabolic diseases, such as diabetes. In addition, her collaboration with other investigators at Washington University will stimulate the translation of basic science discovery to clinical application.”

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The endowment was authorized by Veronica Atkins, wife of the late Robert C. Atkins, M.D., and chair of the board of directors of the Dr. Robert C. Atkins Foundation.

“This professorship will advance the goals of the Atkins Foundation by enabling these researchers at Washington University to test nutritional hypotheses in rigorous scientific studies that will identify better ways to fight obesity,” Veronica Atkins explained. “The Foundation was formed to sustain my husband’s lifelong efforts to combat the obesity epidemic in America, and we believe the Atkins Professorship will play an important role in furthering his objectives.”

Robert C. Atkins, M.D., was a cardiologist with an innovative perspective on nutrition and health. His 1972 book, *Dr. Atkins' Diet Revolution*, gave diet advice contrary to the recommendations of most nutritional experts at the time. The Atkins diet has become increasingly popular since the 1992 publication of his book, *Dr. Atkins' New Diet Revolution*. Atkins died in April of 2003 after sustaining injuries in a fall.

Veronica Atkins is a master gourmet cook and co-author of the book, *Dr. Atkins' Quick and Easy New Diet Cookbook*. She was born in Russia and narrowly escaped the Nazi onslaught during World War II by fleeing to Vienna. She has lived in seven countries and is fluent in as many languages. Music played an important role in her life. She began singing in Europe at a young age and performed professionally as an opera singer from 1963 to 1976. Today she is actively involved in extending Dr. Atkins’ legacy through the work of the Atkins Foundation.

The Dr. Robert C. Atkins Foundation was established in 1999 to ensure that his focus on the role of nutrition in health would continue. The foundation has assets of approximately \$40 million, and it collaborates with professionals and organizations concerned about the devastating impact of the obesity epidemic in America.

Klein, who sees patients at Barnes-Jewish Hospital in St. Louis, helped to organize the first one-year, prospective, controlled study of the Atkins diet. Its results were published in 2003 in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. Together with colleagues at the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Colorado, Klein determined that the low-carbohydrate diet helped people lose weight more quickly and improved their blood lipid profile. Following that preliminary study, Klein and his colleagues have received funding from the National Institutes of Health to evaluate the long-term efficacy of a low-carbohydrate diet for obese patients.

Abumrad did her undergraduate work at the Faculte Des Sciences and the American University of Beirut in Lebanon. She received her doctorate in pharmacology from State University of New York (SUNY) Medical Center in Syracuse, in 1978. After a year as a research associate at Syracuse University, she moved to Vanderbilt University, where she was an associate professor of molecular physiology and biophysics. In 1992, she moved to SUNY at Stony Brook, before coming to Washington University this year to assume the Atkins chair.

Her publications have appeared in numerous journals including the *Journal of Biological Chemistry*, *Nature Genetics* and the *Journal of Clinical Investigation*. Abumrad is the editor of *Current Opinion in Clinical Nutrition and Metabolic Care* and is a frequent reviewer for a number of professional journals and National Institutes of Health scientific review committees.

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Washington University School of Medicine's full-time and volunteer faculty physicians also are the medical staff of Barnes-Jewish and St. Louis Children's hospitals. The School of Medicine is one of the leading medical research, teaching and patient care institutions in the nation, currently ranked second in the nation by *U.S. News & World Report*. Through its affiliations with Barnes-Jewish and St. Louis Children's hospitals, the School of Medicine is linked to BJC HealthCare.

About the Dr. Robert C. Atkins Foundation

Originally formed by Dr. and Mrs. Atkins over three years ago, the Dr. Robert C. Atkins Foundation has provided over \$3 million in grant money to institutions, including Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Ball State University, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, Duke University Medical Center, Pennsylvania Hospital, University of Connecticut, and the University of Kansas. Under the direction of its Chair, Mrs. Veronica Atkins, the Foundation will position itself on the frontline of emerging ideas and groundbreaking research in nutrition and the management and treatment of obesity and associated diseases.

To achieve maximum impact, the Foundation is collaborating with leading professionals and organizations that share a common concern for important health issues including diabetes and the obesity epidemic in America. As part of this effort, the Foundation carefully monitors developments within a number of organizations, among them the American Heart Association, the American Diabetes Association, the North American Association for the Study of Obesity (NAASO), and the activities of Federal Government agencies such as the FDA and the National Institutes of Health. Foundation representatives participate regularly in conferences and other events, which seek to deepen the public understanding of the linkages between obesity, diabetes, and nutrition. It is an objective of the Foundation to compliment the ongoing efforts of others in combating this major public health crisis.

About National Philanthropic Trust

National Philanthropic Trust (NPT) oversees all day-to-day administration, management, and grant making for the Dr. Robert C. Atkins Foundation as a Supporting Organization.

NPT is an independent public charity dedicated to promoting and facilitating charitable giving by individuals, families and organizations while expanding their knowledge in the field of philanthropy. Founded in 1996, NPT is among the 100 largest charities and one of the top 40 grant makers in the United States with more than \$525 million in assets under management. Since its inception, NPT has raised more than \$830 million in charitable assets, and made more than 9,000 grants to U.S. and international charities totaling \$337 million. Led by a national board of trustees and a team of professionals with more than eight decades of philanthropic experience, NPT has proven expertise in the stewardship of charitable donations.

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