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**MEDICAL EXPERTS CALL ON MEDIA TO RETHINK
COVERAGE OF WEIGHT LOSS**
Modest weight loss yields significant health benefits

NEW YORK, July 18, 2008 – The Reality Coalition – a group of experts on overweight and obesity – today issued a call to action for the media to reevaluate the way they report on weight loss. This action comes as the result of the continued news coverage and editorial content that leads consumers to believe that they are only successful dieters if they lose an enormous amount of weight, and that there is no real benefit in losing a small amount of weight.

“There is a tremendous health benefit in modest, gradual weight loss. Incorporating healthy eating including low-fat, low calorie meals, exercising, behavior modification and using science-based products when needed, is the best way to lose weight,” said Reality Coalition co-chair George L. Blackburn, MD, Ph.D. “And any amount of weight loss is good. It is important for these messages to be delivered to the public on a consistent basis through a variety of media channels, including print, broadcast and online outlets.”

In a recent article in the *New England Journal of Medicine* various dieting approaches were evaluated and findings indicate that no matter the type of diet a person is on, low-fat, low carbohydrate, or a Mediterranean diet, any amount of weight loss is beneficial to the patient’s health.

The Reality Coalition is asking the media to join them in their efforts to make this country healthier, starting with a realistic approach to weight loss.

Recently, a nationally syndicated news service implied that a diet may not be worth it if the dieter is only going to lose five to 10 pounds. “In this and many other news stories I read, the key takeaway always seems to be the same – that if a person does not lose extraordinary amounts of weight on a diet or other weight loss regimens, something is wrong,” said Reality Coalition co-chair MRC Greenwood, Ph.D. “This perpetuates the unrealistic approach to weight loss that sets consumers up for failure time and time again.”

The Reality Coalition published a paper on overweight and obesity called “Help Not Hype: Getting Real About Weight Loss,” in the February 2007 issue of *Obesity Management*. In the paper, the Coalition identifies the media as having an important role in the fight against obesity. The media have the ability to positively shape

consumer's perceptions of maintaining a healthy weight by ensuring thoughtful, scientifically grounded editorial content. Conversely, the media can be harmful when they present inaccurate or misleading editorial messages.

Improving physical appearance may motivate some people to lose weight, and it should be noted that being overweight or obese has a much greater impact on physical health. It is estimated that 112,000 more deaths were associated with obesity relative to normal weight in the year 2000. If the overweight/obesity trend is not reversed, the gains in life expectancy and quality of life resulting from medical advances will erode, and increasing health costs will burden the U.S. healthcare system.

For more information, log on to www.reality-coalition.org.

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About Overweight and Obesity

Currently, approximately 65 percent of U.S. adults are overweight or obese, according to the National Institutes of Health. Research suggests that overweight individuals appear to be on the pathway to obesity. Overweight and obesity are associated with an increased risk of developing health problems such as hypertension, type 2 diabetes and heart disease. Factors that can contribute to overweight include an abundance of high-calorie foods, low levels of physical activity, behavior, environment, and genetics. Multiple studies have shown that a modest reduction in weight improves health outcomes significantly in overweight or obese patients.

About the Reality Coalition

The Reality Coalition is a group of esteemed experts on obesity, nutrition, diabetes and healthcare policy who share the common goal of advancing an agenda for realistic approaches to weight loss to achieve improved public health.

The Reality Initiative was launched in 2006 and is supported by an educational grant from GlaxoSmithKline Consumer Healthcare. The Coalition developed a white paper entitled, "Help Not Hype: Getting Real About Weight Loss" (published in *Obesity Management*, February 2007), which was introduced in partnership with the Federal Trade Commission at NAASO, The Obesity Society annual meeting in October 2006. Committed to changing the national weight loss dialogue and broadening its sponsorship base, the Coalition is expanding its efforts in 2008 to invite business leaders, private, public, professional and non-profit groups to partner in our work.

Reality Coalition Members include co-chairs Louis J. Aronne, MD, Dr. George L. Blackburn, MD, Ph.D, and MRC Greenwood, Ph.D; Arthur Frank, MD, Obesity Specialist; Gary Foster, Ph.D, Behavioral Psychologist; Barbara Moore, Ph.D, Nutritionist; Judith Stern, Sc.D, Nutritionist; Anne Wolf, MS, RD, Dietitian; Madelyn Fernstrom, Ph.D, CNS, Nutritionist; Johanna Dwyer, Ph.D, Nutritionist; Susan Cummings, RD, Dietitian; Jeremy Nobel, MD, MPH, Public Health Expert; Valentine Burroughs, MD, MBA, Diabetes Expert; Morgan Downey, JD, Obesity Specialist, Shaping America's Health; NAASO, the Obesity Society, National Consumers League, America On the Move, American Dietetic Association and the American Pharmacists Association.