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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New, Advanced Therapy Program Helps People Who Stutter Acquire Fluent Speech

***Hollins Communications Research Institute
Forges New Ground in the Treatment of Stuttering***

ROANOKE, VA (July 15, 2008) – Scientists at Hollins Communications Research Institute (HCRI), a non-profit research and clinical center (<http://www.stuttering.org>) specializing in the physically based treatment of stuttering, have developed a new stuttering therapy with advanced behavioral, electronic and computer technologies that significantly improve the ease of learning and retaining fluent speech.

An estimated 66 million people worldwide suffer from the effects of stuttering, with three million living in the U.S., according to the National Institutes of Health. Stuttering occurs when speech muscles inappropriately contract and “jump out of control” with too much force and abruptness during attempts to speak. Markers of stuttering include repetitions of sounds, syllables and words; prolongations of first sounds in syllables; and voice blockage when trying to talk. The condition can impair social growth, hinder education and career aspirations, and produce emotional scars that may last a lifetime.

HCRI’s new stuttering therapy, *Hollins Fluency Program: Advanced Speech Reconstruction for Stuttering™* (HFP), helps people who stutter learn how to replace faulty muscle contractions that cause stuttering with new muscle behaviors that generate fluent speech. By literally “reconstructing” muscle actions that drive movements of the tongue, lips, jaw, vocal folds, and breathing mechanisms, individuals who stutter can acquire and sustain the ability to speak fluently.

Effective across a wide range of stuttering types and severities, HFP represents a meaningful alternative to existing treatments, according to HCRI Founder and President Ronald L. Webster, Ph.D.. “Many stuttering therapies require long-term participation (a year or longer), are presented by clinicians who have little direct experience with stuttering, and typically yield unreliable results,” said Webster. “In addition, fluency enhancing devices that have garnered media attention, such as the FluencyMaster and SpeechEasy, help with only about 25% of stuttering cases,” he added.

Conversely, Webster reports that 93% of HCRI clients master fluent speech by the end of the 12-day intensive therapy program. Researchers developed HFP after studying and treating more than 5,500 people who stutter, ranging in age from 12 to 73. This third generation HCRI therapy incorporates new knowledge of muscle movements that actively generate fluent speech for each sound class in language and features additional treatment innovations including:

- Enhanced computer-based training techniques that make it easier for clients to understand, learn and maintain details of muscle movements that produce fluent speech;
- An acoustically based biofeedback system that measures speech muscle use in real time and signals clients whether or not they are using their muscles correctly;
- A virtual transfer module that facilitates the transition from fluency skill use in the clinic to fluency skill use in daily life; and
- Sophisticated performance tracking tools that determine therapy progression and individualized support needs.

Future Potential for Global Treatment Access

HFP was built on a web-based platform and offers the potential to deliver quality controlled stuttering therapy on a 24/7 basis to anyone in the world with internet access. During the next two years, HCRI plans to develop remote therapy administration over the web and partner with health systems of countries where quality stuttering treatment is needed.

“The fact that we will be able to present stuttering therapy virtually any where over the internet means that barriers to treatment availability might be reduced or eliminated,” said Webster.

“There are many places in the world where stuttering treatment is non-existent. Our new

program could address this problem and help many who stutter to acquire fluent speech – a gift most people take for granted.”

About HCRI

Hollins Communications Research Institute (<http://www.stuttering.org>), founded in 1972 by Ronald L. Webster, Ph.D., has grown into a world-leading center for the investigation and treatment of stuttering. The non-profit institute is unique from other stuttering organizations in that work focuses on developing scientifically based treatment methods, as well as administering stuttering therapy.

More than 5,500 people from 23 countries have come to HCRI for stuttering therapy. Clients include John Stossel of ABC TV's *20/20* program; Arthur Blank, cofounder of Home Depot; and Annie Glenn, wife of senator and astronaut John Glenn. HCRI is located at 7851 Enon Drive, Roanoke, Virginia, 24019. Contact HCRI at admin@stuttering.org or 540-265-5650. For video speech samples and more information, visit <http://www.stuttering.org>.

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