



For Immediate Release

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**ABBOTT FUND AND BAYLOR COLLEGE OF MEDICINE
PARTNER TO CREATE THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL
NETWORK OF CENTERS TREATING CHILDREN WITH HIV**

HOUSTON, Texas and ABBOTT PARK, Ill., April 14, 2005 – To address the growing need for care and treatment of children with HIV/AIDS in the developing world, Baylor College of Medicine announced today that it has received a grant from the Abbott Fund's *Step Forward* program to link Baylor's individual pediatric HIV clinics through the creation of the Baylor Children's Clinical Centers of Excellence Network. The Baylor Network is comprised of Baylor and local-country health professionals working in pediatric clinics that provide care and treatment to 3,000 children in the developing world, more than any other organization worldwide. Key areas of focus for the Baylor Network include training health professionals, conducting research, and the sharing of knowledge and best practices to advance the treatment of children with HIV.

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According to UNAIDS, there are currently more than 2.1 million children below the age of 15 with HIV in the developing world, and 1,700 more children become infected every day. With the influx of international funding, many countries are beginning to scale up antiretroviral (ARV) treatment programs. However, due to the overwhelming impact of the AIDS pandemic, the complexity of treating HIV-infected children, and a lack of resources and specialized training, few countries have prioritized the treatment of HIV-infected children.

"The care of children often is overlooked, despite the growing toll the disease has taken on children in the developing world," said Mark W. Kline, M.D., director, Baylor International Pediatric AIDS Initiative, Baylor College of Medicine. "The work done at the Baylor clinics demonstrates that HIV-infected children can be successfully treated despite the inherent challenges in resource-constrained settings. The goal of the Baylor Network is to build on this success through the creation of a global platform that can serve as a catalyst for advancing the treatment of children with HIV in developing countries."

Rapid Expansion of a Successful Partnership

Baylor and the Abbott Fund's *Step Forward* program began their partnership to create pioneering solutions for children affected by HIV/AIDS and their families in 2001 through the creation of the Romanian-American Children's Center, the first stand-alone pediatric HIV clinic in a resource-limited setting. Through a comprehensive approach to treatment that combines state-of-the-art medical care, support and counseling for children and their families, and outreach to the community, the death rate among known pediatric HIV cases was reduced by more than 90 percent in Constanta, Romania – the epicenter of pediatric HIV in Eastern Europe.

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The clinic in Romania has since served as the model for subsequent Baylor clinics, including the recently announced Abbott-funded clinic in Malawi that will be completed by December 2005. The rapidly expanding Baylor Network also includes clinics supported by other donors located in Botswana, Uganda and Libya. Two additional clinics in Lesotho and Swaziland are also due to open by the end of 2005.

The Abbott Fund's *Step Forward* program grant of \$600,000 to fund the creation and ongoing operations of the Baylor Network is the latest example of the successful Abbott-Baylor partnership. To date, Abbott and the Abbott Fund have provided more than \$12 million in grants and donated product to Baylor initiatives aimed at transforming the lives of children living with HIV/AIDS in the developing world.

"In only a few years, the Baylor model of pediatric treatment has expanded from one clinic in Romania to six additional pediatric centers operating in countries throughout Africa," said Jeff Richardson, executive director of the Abbott Fund's *Step Forward* program. "Through the Baylor Network, local-country health professionals and Baylor staff now have the opportunity to interact and discuss global and local-country advances in pediatric care, and to work together to further advance the scale-up of pediatric treatment programs around the world."

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Pediatric HIV Training - a Critical Part of Accelerating Treatment

The lack of trained health care workers is a key barrier to treatment scale up in Africa. There is only an estimated one health care worker for every 1,000 people in Africa compared to 10 per 1,000 in North America. To create lasting change in developing world communities by addressing the critical need for training of health care professionals in pediatric HIV/AIDS care, the Abbott Fund International Pediatric HIV/AIDS fellowship program has been established within the Baylor Network. The fellowship program supports health professionals for training in pediatric HIV/AIDS care and treatment, public health, or clinical research. Recipients will be chosen from countries where Baylor clinics are active and are expected to continue to advance the care and treatment of children with HIV through the Baylor Network.

The first Abbott Fellow is Dr. Mark Mugo Kabue from Lesotho, who is earning his doctorate at the University of Texas School of Public Health, with an emphasis on HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment program management.

"Given the tremendous impact of HIV in Lesotho and other African countries, it is especially important that African medical professionals are trained to address the complexities of HIV treatment, particularly in children," said Dr. Kabue. "The training and practical pediatric clinical experience I'm gaining through the Abbott Fellowship will allow me to provide quality care and treatment for children with AIDS when I return to work in the Baylor Network in Africa."

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A second Abbott Fellow recipient will start in the fall of 2005, followed by additional recipients in the coming years. The Abbott Fund grant also supports specialized training of existing staff at the Baylor clinics, as well as the development of educational training materials and treatment protocols. In addition, the Baylor Network will have bi-annual meetings with Baylor and local-country staff to further advance training and knowledge sharing; the next meeting will be held in Uganda in May 2005.

About Baylor

The Baylor Children's Clinical Centers of Excellence Network is an extension of the Baylor International Pediatric AIDS Initiative (BIPAI). BIPAI was established in 1996 and is the largest university-based program worldwide dedicated to improving the health and lives of HIV-infected children. Approximately 12,000 HIV-infected children and families will receive care and treatment in the established centers by the end of 2006. For more information, please visit www.bayloraids.org.

About the Abbott Fund

Abbott and the Abbott Fund have made a \$100 million commitment over five years to address critical HIV/AIDS issues in Africa and throughout the developing world, including expanding access to testing and treatment; preventing mother-to-child transmission of HIV; modernizing health care systems and infrastructure; and providing care and support for children affected by HIV/AIDS through the *Step Forward* program. *Step Forward* addresses specific community needs in four interrelated areas: health care services and infrastructure; voluntary HIV counseling and testing; education; and basic community needs, such as clean water. For more information, please visit www.stepforwardforchildren.org.

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The Abbott Fund is a not-for-profit, philanthropic foundation established by Abbott, a global, broad-based health care company devoted to the discovery, development, manufacture and marketing of pharmaceuticals and medical products, including devices and diagnostics.

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