

**Gastroparesis and Dysmotilities  
Association  
GPDA**

[www.digestivedistress.com](http://www.digestivedistress.com)

**Press Release**

**Jeanne Keith-Ferris, RN, BScN  
President/Founder**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** August 13, 2006  
Flushing, New York

**GPDA (the Gastroparesis and Dysmotilities Association), the New York Presbyterian Hospital, the Starr Foundation and Medtronic Inc. team up for the first annual Digestive Motility Awareness Day at Shea Stadium when the New York Mets meet the Philadelphia Phillies, August 26, 2006. GPDA is a North American-wide, non-profit association dedicated to awareness and support for research into digestive motility diseases.**

When the New York Mets and the Philadelphia Phillies get ready to “Play ball!” on August 26, excitement will be generated — not only for the first-place Mets, but also for another first: the first annual Digestive Motility Awareness Day at Shea Stadium.

Fans will be greeted by volunteers from a North American-wide, non-profit group providing information about digestive motility problems. Most in attendance will no doubt react with the thought that this is just one more unusual disease that does not touch their personal lives.

The surprise — though unfamiliar with the terminology, nearly half of the people sitting in the bleachers will have experienced, or are continuing to suffer to various degrees from, a gut motility problem. So common as to be overlooked — except by those afflicted — this very real problem involving daily or weekly bouts of nausea, heartburn, regurgitation, bloating, an early feeling of fullness with meals, abdominal pain or constipation is a real struggle for millions of Americans.

As many as 25% of Americans suffer with routine symptoms of upper or lower digestive distress. Often triggered by food, such symptoms lead many sufferers to restrict their diets, change their lifestyles, consume large amounts of over-the-counter remedies, miss time from work, or frequent their physicians searching for relief.

Food is normally moved along the digestive system by waves of muscular action known as peristalsis. Doctors use the term digestive *motility* to describe the gut’s overall processing, pumping and waste elimination. Sections of impaired nerves found sandwiched between

the muscular walls throughout the length of the digestive tract may hold up or impede the passage of a meal. When motility is uncoordinated, or weakened, symptoms result.

Sometimes doctors know the reason for impaired gut nerves. Diseases such as diabetes, Parkinson's disease, chronic liver failure, muscular dystrophy, AIDS/HIV, cancer and connective tissue disease can affect the nerves within the digestive tract.

There are several different digestive motility diseases affecting part or all of the digestive tract. In the upper-gut, the most common of these is gastroparesis.

Gastroparesis literally means "weak stomach" and is sometimes referred to as "delayed gastric emptying". It can play havoc with good blood glucose control and absorption of diabetic medication. Those who are more severely affected experience persistent nausea and vomiting, which can lead to months spent in a hospital bed and the insertion of a feeding tube to bypass paralyzed stomachs.

In the mid-gut, a very serious digestive motility disease is chronic intestinal pseudo-obstruction (CIP). This disease involves spastic or flaccid paralysis and may progress to involve the entire digestive tract leading to digestive failure and the patient's dependence upon artificial nutrition or a full digestive tract transplant.

In the lower gut, motility may be faulty. Presenting as chronic constipation that is unresponsive to standard treatments such as laxatives and fibre, it may indicate a severe digestive motility disease called colonic inertia. Nerves in the colon slowly progress to paralysis; yet, it can take years before the sufferer is properly diagnosed.

A number of those who are affected by digestive motility problems are young women whose gut motility disorder results from an unknown medical cause. Over the years, these women may experience a cycle of digestive symptoms ranging from bothersome to disabling and involving a long journey through numerous medical consultations. Often, such patients are dismissed initially by their physicians and told they have a bad case of "nervous stomach" — or worse, are sometimes even blamed for their own suffering.

Famous folks are not exempt. Tammy Wynette and Pope John Paul II experienced digestive motility diseases, and Johnny Cash's last battle with stomach problems signaled the effects of diabetic gastroparesis.

The Gastroparesis and Dysmotilities Association - USA (GPDA & GPDA-USA) established an awareness program in May generating grassroots support across North America. A public service announcement was developed with Archie Manning (father of NFL quarterbacks Payton and Eli) as the spokesperson. Though Archie will not be able to join the Shea awareness evening, the PSA will be shown at Shea Stadium during game time on August 26, 2006.