

**Gastroparesis and Dysmotilities
Association
GPDA**

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Press Release

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 23, 2006
Oxford, Mississippi**

Archie Manning, former NFL quarterback and father to Peyton and Eli Manning, teams up with the Gastroparesis and Dysmotilities Association - USA to gain a first down for awareness of a common, disabling stomach condition.

Archibald Elisha Manning III dazzled many over the years as a former quarterback for the University of Mississippi (Ole Miss), later settling into a long NFL career with the New Orleans Saints. Archie's passion on the field fired up fans from across the nation and won over new enthusiasts to the game of football. He is considered one of the nation's best college quarterbacks ever, and now two of his boys are following in his path with the same zeal.

Displaced by Hurricane Katrina, and back briefly at the University of Mississippi in Oxford, Archie was called upon by a fellow Ole Miss quarterback alumnus, Bobby Ray Franklin. Bobby Franklin is also well known to many as an MVP quarterback from Ole Miss, a record holder in the NFL and a coach with three Super Bowl rings.

For the Franklin family, life had been a magical ride until their daughter, Mary Ashley, was stricken with a poorly understood digestive disease. For nearly ten years, their life has been turned upside down with an endless succession of hospital stays and fearful nights watching their only daughter battle constant nausea, vomiting and abdominal pain.

Suffering from gastroparesis — a disorder affecting the fine, mesh-like nerves deep within the stomach — Mary Ashley has had numerous central intravenous lines and feeding tubes inserted in order to bypass her poorly working stomach. She has a severe form of this problem.

Many who suffer with a less severe case may go years experiencing a constant

combination of symptoms ranging from bothersome to disabling — symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, early fullness when eating, loss of appetite, bloating, and abdominal discomfort or pain. It may be a long journey involving consultations with numerous doctors before this nerve-gut disorder is properly diagnosed.

Often such patients are initially dismissed by their physicians and told they have a bad case of “nervous stomach” — or worse, are sometimes even blamed for their own suffering — as few doctors know what to do with them. Furthermore, the general public has never heard of gastroparesis even though it is as common as stomach ulcers and affects about 5 million Americans.

For the Franklin family it was time to do something to bring about awareness. They were to learn that the Gastroparesis and Dysmotilities Association - USA (GPDA & GPDA-USA) had established an awareness program generating grassroots support across North America for their proclamation to declare May as Digestive Motility Awareness Month.

“It just made sense that Mississippi would be the focal point of this awareness action,” said Martha Kern, President of GPDA-USA, based in Jackson, Mississippi. “After all,” continued Martha, “we have one of the top gastroenterologists for gastroparesis, Dr. Thomas Abell, right here at the University of Mississippi in Jackson. This center has been designated as one of the National Institutes of Health clinical research consortiums for gastroparesis.”

The campaign, “Help GUTS”, works as an acronym for “Give Us the Solutions” to bring attention to this family of nerve-gut digestive diseases and disorders which all share similar characteristics of spastic to paralyzed gut motility caused by impaired nerves. Any region of the gut may be affected; however gastroparesis — or, weak stomach — is the most common of the more severe and disabling gut motility problems.

The term *motility* refers to the propulsive, muscular churning and pumping action needed for digestion and waste elimination. Digestive disorders of motility are extremely common, affecting as much as one third of North Americans. One such disorder, irritable bowel syndrome, which occurs in the lower gut, is well recognized, but the more severe forms of these disorders of motility remain largely unknown to the public.

Nerves in the mid-gut may fail for unknown reasons, with young women being the primary targets of such a disorder. Yet, the same vexing digestive symptoms may be experienced by those whose known illness also impairs the workings of the gut’s motility — illnesses like: diabetes, Parkinson’s disease, AIDS, scleroderma, chronic liver disease (such as Hepatitis C), and chronic kidney disease, to name just a few.

Archie Manning remains greatly involved in community activities. When asked to help out a fellow Ole Miss alumnus, it was second nature for him to jump into the action. Recognizing the serious nature of gastroparesis, Archie was more than happy to do his part to help raise awareness.

GPDA-USA also has an audio and visual public service announcement by Archie Manning regarding gastroparesis, which is slated for release to top stations across the United States in early May. We are grateful to the University of Mississippi, Oxford, Media Relations, for their donation of time and skills in developing our PSA.