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JScreen Launches National Cancer Genetic Screening Program

JScreen's National Cancer Initiative Offers a Comprehensive Testing Panel to Analyze the BRCA Genes and Over 60 Other Cancer Susceptibility Genes

(ATLANTA) – JScreen, a national public health initiative based out of Emory University School of Medicine's Department of Human Genetics, today announced a new program that offers at-home testing for more than 60 cancer susceptibility genes associated with hereditary risks for breast, ovarian, prostate, colorectal, skin and many other cancers.

"Making cancer genetic testing accessible is key," said Jane Lowe Meisel, MD, Associate Professor of Hematology and Medical Oncology at the Emory University School of Medicine, and medical director for JScreen's cancer program. "This type of testing is important because it alerts people to their risks before they get cancer. They can then take action to help prevent cancer altogether or to detect it at an early, treatable stage."

Until now, JScreen's focus has been on reproductive carrier screening for diseases like Tay-Sachs that occur more commonly in the Jewish population, as well as diseases such as cystic fibrosis that are common in the general population. Thanks to the support and vision of The Marcus Foundation and other donors, JScreen has tested thousands of participants, and given high-risk couples essential information about options to help them have healthy children.

JScreen heard from members of Jewish communities across the U.S. that they were also interested in genetic testing to assess personal cancer risk. Their concerns stemmed from the fact that Ashkenazi Jewish men and women face a 1 in 40 risk of carrying mutations in the *BRCA1* and *BRCA2* genes; this is **more than 10 times the risk in the general population**. Ashkenazi Jews are at increased risk for carrying these mutations even if they do not have a personal or close family history of *BRCA*-related cancers (breast, ovarian, prostate, pancreatic, melanoma). Jews are also at higher risk for carrying mutations in the *APC* gene, increasing their risk for colorectal cancer.

JScreen is the first national non-profit to offer at-home reproductive carrier screening and cancer genetic screening focused on hereditary risks in the Jewish community. Unlike direct-to-consumer genetic testing companies, JScreen provides genetic counseling via telehealth to ensure that people understand their results and implications for their health.

"Knowledge is power. With an understanding and awareness of their cancer risks and available options, individuals can work with their health-care providers on next steps for cancer prevention," said Karen Arnovitz Grinzaid, MS, CGC, Assistant Professor of Human Genetics at Emory University School of Medicine, and JScreen's Executive Director.

Karen Shmerling, age 62, was screened during JScreen's Atlanta pilot study conducted prior to launch of the national cancer initiative. "I never even thought to get screened until I learned about the study," she said. "After I underwent screening, I found out I was *BRCA2* positive. I chose to have a bilateral

mastectomy before cancer could possibly come my way. JScreen did indeed save my life and can do so for others who take the first steps toward genetic testing.”

“Launching our new cancer program and providing convenient and affordable access to genetic testing will help prevent cancer,” said Grinzaid. “We are thrilled to build on our reproductive carrier screening program and bring this additional important resource to the Jewish community. Through simple saliva tests that can be done at-home, we can now provide information about genetic risks across an entire lifespan that will save and change lives.”

Please visit JScreen.org for more information.

JScreen’s cancer genetic screening initiative was launched thanks to seed funding from The Marcus Foundation. Other contributors include The Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation, the Kay Family Foundation Fund of the Community Foundation of Greater Atlanta, and Pfizer. To donate please visit jscreen.org/donate.

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About JScreen

JScreen is a national non-profit public health initiative dedicated to preventing Jewish genetic diseases. Headquartered in Atlanta at Emory University School of Medicine, the JScreen initiative provides convenient at-home access to cutting-edge genetic testing technology, patient education and genetic counseling services. JScreen believes the combination of education, access to premier genetic screening technologies and personalized, confidential support are the keys to preventing devastating diseases.