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October 21, 2015

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ethiopians Travel to Plano for Life Changing Spine Surgery

*Local and International Healthcare Providers Collaborate to Give
State of the Art Charity Medical Care to Third World Children*

(Plano, Texas) Two young Ethiopians with severe spinal deformities arrived this week to undergo extensive corrective surgery at The Brain and Spine Hospital at The Medical Center of Plano (MCOP). As a national leader in neurosciences, MCOP will provide all surgeries and recovery care at no charge. Theodore Belanger, MD, an orthopedic surgeon with Texas Back Institute and on the medical staff at MCOP, will be donating his surgical services. Dr. Belanger travels to Ethiopia each year on a pilgrimage to offer spinal surgery to the community.

“These two young people do not have access to the proper medical care necessary to intervene and reconstruct their extreme spinal deformities. We are extremely pleased to participate in this joint effort to significantly improve the quality of life in these patients and give them a chance for an independent, productive future,” said Charles Gressle, CEO of The Medical Center of Plano. “Without the combined efforts of several medical providers, these kids would not have the chance to reach their full potential.”

One of the teenagers is Samrawit Adinew Teshnie, age 13, from Mojo, Ethiopia. Her spine deformity started developing at age 5. Her family lives in a mud house with a modest income of only \$90.00 a month. Once she is able to stand and sit upright without pain Samrawit dreams of becoming an astronomer.

The other patient is Haymanot's Asmare, a 20 year old with a rapidly deteriorating spinal condition. Haymanot is currently completely bent over at a 90 degree angle and unable to stand up straight from ankylosing spondylitis, an inflammatory condition characterized by auto-fusion of the entire spine. He has been living on the streets in Addis Ababa and was discovered at Mother Teresa's Mission, before being accepted for spinal treatment in Plano.

These two young patients are scheduled to have spinal reconstructive surgery at The Brain and Spine Hospital at The Medical Center of Plano early next week. Recovery may take several months.

About The Medical Center of Plano

The Medical Center of Plano this year celebrates 40 years of caring for residents of Collin and adjoining counties. It is a full-service, 493-bed, acute-care facility with more than 1,600 employees, including 1,000-plus physicians who represent upwards of 70 specialties and subspecialties. Accredited by The Joint Commission,

The Medical Center of Plano is a Level II Trauma Center and recently was designated a Comprehensive (Level I) Stroke Center. Other honors and accolades include the Level III recognition granted to the NICU and the hospital's Magnet designation for nursing excellence. The Medical Center of Plano also owns the distinction of having been Collin County's first Chest Pain Accredited hospital and will soon open the county's first burn center in October 15, 2015. Visit www.TheMedicalCenterofPlano.com for more information.

About Texas Back Institute

Texas Back Institute, one of the largest freestanding multispecialty spine clinics in the United States, was established in 1977 and provides comprehensive medical care for back and neck pain. Texas Back Institute is a spine care leader specializing in spinal arthroplasty, minimally invasive spine surgery, degenerative disc disease, spinal deformation and complex spine revision. As an academic health care organization, Texas Back Institute has trained hundreds of physicians, scientists and allied health professionals around the world. Its surgeons employ state-of-the-art technology and are involved in many clinical trials. Texas Back Institute's professional staff includes board-certified spine surgeons, internists, physiatrists, pain specialists, and a team of physical therapists. Texas Back Institute has locations across Texas in: Arlington, Dallas, Denton, Flower Mound, Fort Worth, Frisco, Mansfield, McKinney, Midland, Plano, Rockwall, and Wichita Falls. For more information, visit www.texasback.com.

Supplemental Sidebar:

Rick Hodes, MD, identified and coordinated Samrawit and Haymont's travel and medical logistics for their medical treatment. Dr. Hodes is a well-known American doctor specializing in cancer, heart disease, and spinal conditions. Since the 1980s, he has worked in Ethiopia and has adopted a number of children from there. He is medical director of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and is a published book author.

As fate would have it, Samrawit and Haymont's traveled from Ethiopia with Dejene Hodes, Dr. Hodes' 22 year old adopted son. Dr. Hodes found Dejene as an abandon orphan with TB of the spine and severe spinal deformity in the sick, unadoptable kids at Mother Teresa's Mission in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's capital, where he is a doctor. Dr. Hode's adopted Dejene, added him to his health insurance and brought in to Dallas in 2002 for spinal surgery at Texas Scottish Rite Hospital. Dejene is now a successful business man in Addis Ababa who speaks fluent English and Amharic.

The World Affairs Council of Dallas/Fort Worth will feature Dr. Hodes as its keynote speaker at noon on Thursday, October 22 at the Rosewood Crescent in Dallas. For luncheon event information, please contact Director of Marketing and Communications Gail Host at 214-965-8413 or ghost@dfwworld.org.

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