

Contact:
Christin Veasley; Phyllis Mate
401-398-0830; 301-299-0775
chris@nva.org
www.nva.org

ABC's "Private Practice" Inaccurately Portrays Serious Women's Health Condition
National Institutes of Health Launch Campaign to Help Millions Suffering from Painful Sex

WASHINGTON, D.C. – October 24, 2007 -- In the October 10 episode of the ABC hit series, *Private Practice*, a young woman unable to have sex with her new husband, visits Dr. Addison Montgomery, played by Kate Walsh. During her gynecological exam, the woman screams in pain and is diagnosed with vulvodynia. With the help of Hollywood magic, Montgomery and her partner cure the condition and the elated couple's honeymoon begins.

"While the producers deserve credit for trying to depict the symptoms of vulvodynia, 13 million women in the real world would painfully disagree with the show's fairy tale ending," comments Phyllis Mate, President of the National Vulvodynia Association (www.nva.org).

This isn't the first time popular television has inaccurately portrayed the condition. In a 2001 episode of HBO's *Sex and the City*, Kristin Davis' character, Charlotte, complains to her gynecologist of burning pain "down there" and is diagnosed with vulvodynia. The gynecologist prescribes an antidepressant and Charlotte is miraculously cured by the end of the episode!

In reality, vulvodynia, or chronic pain in the external vaginal area, is a highly prevalent condition that is difficult to treat. It is often misdiagnosed as a yeast infection and the cause(s) is unclear. Although there are treatments that provide some pain relief, there is no cure. In many cases, vulvodynia destroys marriages. Some sufferers are unable to maintain careers because they can't sit for more than 30 minutes, while others are bedridden with unrelenting pain.

To spread the word about this hidden condition, the NIH is launching the *first* National Vulvodynia Awareness Campaign at the National Press Club in Washington, DC, on October 24, 2007. As part of this campaign, eight women of diverse backgrounds have courageously stepped forward to share their personal stories.

Christin Veasley, a young patient advocate describes the agony of living with vulvodynia. "Women are too embarrassed to reveal they have the condition, so they suffer alone. Feeling that you can't talk about it adds to the suffering," she says.