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**JOIN SCIENTISTS, BIOTECH COMPANIES, AND PATIENTS
ON THE FRONTLINES OF ALZHEIMER'S RESEARCH**

NOVA: CAN ALZHEIMER'S BE STOPPED?

Premieres Wednesday, April 13, 2016 at 9PM/8c on PBS

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[BOSTON] – Alzheimer's disease robs victims of their memories, their independence, and eventually their lives. It is the most common type of dementia, affecting five million people in the US alone, a number expected to double over the next 20 years as the population ages. With so much at stake, researchers, doctors, and patients worldwide are in a race to develop new drugs that could stop one of the most pressing global health challenges of our time.

In a new one-hour documentary, NOVA—a production of WGBH Boston—has partnered with Tangled Bank Studios and Holt Productions to transport viewers to the front lines of this fast-paced, life-and-death detective story. *CAN ALZHEIMER'S BE STOPPED?* premieres Wednesday, April 13 at 9PM/8c on PBS (check local listings).

Despite the urgent need for treatment, dozens of drug trials to tackle the disease have failed. Less than one percent of drugs tested for Alzheimer's have been approved, and none of them can stop the disease. *CAN ALZHEIMER'S BE STOPPED?* takes viewers behind the scenes to reveal how drug trials are designed, what makes them so challenging, and why researchers are encouraged in their quest for an effective treatment.

"There's only one way out of this problem and that's research," said **Kenneth S. Kosik, University of California, Santa Barbara**. "Each trial stands on the shoulders of the previous one, allowing insights to proceed as everything in science does: incrementally."

CAN ALZHEIMER'S BE STOPPED? provides up-to-the-minute insight into what we know—and still need to learn—about this deadly disease, while telling the story of remarkable people from all walks of life who are confronting the disease and revealing the tough challenges that Alzheimer's presents to families. The film introduces us to rare families where the disease is hereditary and where certain children are genetically predestined to develop the disease in middle age. Among the heroes are the courageous patients participating in clinical trials, testing drugs that may help them but also prove a boon to millions of others.

"This film shows viewers a very human side to this illness, but also breaks down the science of this extremely complicated disease to help people understand what it is and why it is so difficult to find treatments and cures," said **Paula S. Apsell, Senior Executive Producer for NOVA**. "It

also shows there is real progress being made and breakthroughs could be on the horizon sooner than we think.”

“Alzheimer’s disease stands out as one of the great unmet medical needs of our time,” said **Dennis Liu, Executive Director of Tangled Bank Studios**. “I hope that these compelling patient stories and exciting new science will draw viewers in to think about where new medicines come from and come to understand how important research is to addressing critical health issues. It’s a huge community effort that involves basic and clinical researchers, industry, and importantly patients and caregivers.”

PROMISING RESEARCH

CAN ALZHEIMER’S BE STOPPED? takes viewers around the world in a search for answers about this devastating disease. Viewers meet British researchers **Alison Goate** and **John Hardy**, who studied families with a history of Alzheimer’s. They found the first genetic evidence that the amyloid plaques that build up in the brains of patients are a likely cause of the disease and not just a symptom. Those plaques have been a prime target of drug development at biotech and pharmaceutical companies ever since. Companies such as Biogen, Genentech, and Eli Lilly are investing billions of dollars and devoting unprecedented time and resources in the push to develop therapies that could treat, prevent or slow down the disease.

Viewers also travel to Medellín, Colombia, to meet the largest known family with a genetic predisposition for Alzheimer’s. This extended family provides a unique opportunity in the search for a cure: a population of people where a quarter of them are predicted to get the disease. By testing a new drug in family members who don’t yet have symptoms, scientists have the opportunity to see if their drug can slow the progression of the disease, and maybe even prevent it from striking altogether.

But it’s not just plaques that plague the brains of Alzheimer’s patients. The protein tau also forms tangles, choking neurons and causing dementia to set in. As researcher **Reisa Sperling** describes it, amyloid pulls the trigger, and tau is the bullet that ultimately kills the nerve cells.

THE ALZHEIMER’S EPIDEMIC: PERSONAL STORIES

CAN ALZHEIMER’S BE STOPPED? tells the intimate and difficult stories of patients in the US at various stages of the disease and follows some through their clinical drug trials. Viewers meet **Donna**, an aging parent whose adult son Tony must watch the mother he knew slowly slip into confusion. Donna is taking an experimental drug that targets plaques, hoping to stave off dementia. **Bonnie** and **David** are a husband-and-wife duo struggling to hold on to the memories they’ve made together. Bonnie is participating in Genentech’s clinical trial for mild-to-moderate Alzheimer’s and is seen getting PET scans. At 64, **Greg O’Brien** is a father and reporter whose Cape Cod biking accident and subsequent brain scans revealed that he was suffering the early stages of Alzheimer’s. He wants to shatter the stereotype of Alzheimer’s and is chronicling the progression of his illness while he can. Can new treatments help these people and thus many others?

CAN ALZHEIMER’S BE STOPPED? is a NOVA production of Tangled Bank Studios, LLC in association with Holt Productions, LLC for WGBH Boston. Tangled Bank Studios, LLC is a production company established and funded by the Howard Hughes Medical Institute.

National corporate funding for NOVA is provided by Google and Cancer Treatment Centers of America. Major funding for NOVA is provided by the David H. Koch Fund for Science, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and public television viewers. NOVA is produced for PBS by WGBH Boston.

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About NOVA

Now in its 43rd season, NOVA is the most-watched primetime science series on American television, reaching an average of five million viewers weekly. The series remains committed to producing in-depth science programming in the form of hour-long (and occasionally longer) documentaries, from the latest breakthroughs in technology to the deepest mysteries of the natural world. NOVA is a production of WGBH Boston. NOVA airs Wednesdays at 9pm ET/PT on WGBH Boston and most PBS stations. The Director of the WGBH Science Unit and Senior Executive Producer of NOVA is Paula S. Apsell.

About Tangled Bank Studios

Tangled Bank Studios, LLC is a production company dedicated to the creation of original science documentaries for broadcast, theatrical, and digital distribution. Founded in 2011 by the Howard Hughes Medical Institute as an extension of its long-standing science education mission, the company aims to produce programs that capture compelling stories of discovery across all branches of scientific inquiry. Headquartered in Chevy Chase, MD, Tangled Bank Studios partners with producers, broadcasters and distributors around the world.

About Holt Productions

Sarah Holt has produced, directed, written and/or edited over 40 hours of broadcast documentaries for PBS, NOVA, the American Experience, and cable networks. In pursuit of her stories, she has followed explorers into unknown caves, doctors into the midst of Third World epidemics, and geologists unearthing the secrets of past mass extinctions. Her strong visual and narrative approach to filmmaking has been recognized with numerous awards, including three Emmys. She is also a three-time winner of the AAAS Science Journalism Award. Her company is based in Boston, MA.

About PBS

PBS, with over 350 member stations, offers all Americans the opportunity to explore new ideas and new worlds through television and online content. Each month, PBS reaches more than 103 million people through television and over 33 million people online, inviting them to experience the worlds of science, history, nature and public affairs; to hear diverse viewpoints; and to take front row seats to world-class drama and performances. PBS' broad array of programs has been consistently honored by the industry's most coveted award competitions. Teachers of children from pre-K through 12th grade turn to PBS for digital content and services that help bring classroom lessons to life. PBS' premier children's TV programming and its website, pbskids.org, are parents' and teachers' most trusted partners in inspiring and nurturing curiosity and love of learning in children. More information about PBS is available at www.pbs.org, one of the leading dot-org websites on the Internet, or by following PBS on Twitter, Facebook or through our apps

for mobile devices. Specific program information and updates for press are available at pbs.org/pressroom or by following [PBS Pressroom on Twitter](#).

About WGBH

WGBH Boston is America's preeminent public broadcaster and the largest producer of PBS content for TV and the Web, including *Frontline*, *Nova*, *American Experience*, *Masterpiece*, *Antiques Roadshow*, *Arthur*, *Curious George* and more than a dozen other prime-time, lifestyle, and children's series. WGBH also is a major supplier of programming for public radio, and oversees Public Radio International (PRI). As a leader in educational multimedia for the classroom, WGBH supplies content to PBS LearningMedia, a national broadband service for teachers and students. WGBH also is a pioneer in technologies and services that make media accessible to those with hearing or visual impairments. WGBH has been recognized with hundreds of honors. More info at www.wgbh.org.

Pressroom:

pbs.org/pressroom

PR Contacts:

For NOVA:

Eileen Campion

Roslan & Campion Public Relations

212.966.4600

eileen@rc-pr.com

Jennifer Welsh

NOVA/WGBH

617.300.4382

jennifer_welsh@wgbh.org

For Tangled Bank Studios:

Hayley Moller

Glover Park Group

202.481.8746

hmoller@gpg.com

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