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COMPARATIVE ANIMAL GENOMICS AND EVOLUTION OF HUMAN DISEASE
*Research from San Diego Frozen Zoo Provides Model for
Cardiovascular Disease in Humans*

SAN DIEGO (Sept. 13, 2010) – The 14th Annual Scientific Meeting of the Heart Failure Society of America (HFSA) will feature a discussion on the similarities in genomic diseases between animals and humans, titled "Comparative Genomics and Human Disease: Some Recent Contributions from Zoos." In his discussion, Dr. Oliver A. Ryder, Geneticist, Director and Kleberg Chair of Genetics at the Zoological Society of San Diego, will focus on how genetic diversity in great apes compares to our own genetic make-up, and contributes to similarities and differences in disease risk, including cardiovascular disease.

"It's fascinating to analyze the structural aspects that contribute to the genetic make-up of animals like the great apes," said Dr. Ryder. "Significant progress in genome sequencing is allowing us to conduct human and ape comparison studies, lending great insight to our understanding of the trajectory and evolution of genomic disease."

Dr. Ryder's discussion will highlight his team's research on the cell culture and banking of cells, tissues and DNA in the Frozen Zoo™ of the San Diego Zoo Institute for Conservation Research. His research has allowed the team to study genetic variation, sex determination, paternity analysis and evolutionary changes between populations and species of mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians. In his presentation, Dr. Ryder will also touch on the dietary risk factors in animals like the great apes, which have revealed a high rate of mortality attributable to cardiovascular disease.

Dr. Ryder's research team undertakes educational activities locally as well as capacity building for – and transfer of – technology to countries with significant wildlife resources form an integral part of the division's activities. He is an Adjunct Professor in the Division of Biology at the University of California at San Diego, in the Biology Department at San Diego State University, and is a Visiting Scientist at the University of California, Riverside. Recently, he was a co-organizer of the Genome 10K project to unveil the diversity of vertebrate life by sequencing and analyzing the genomes of 10,000 vertebrate species.

For a complete list of annual meeting sessions or for details on attending the conference, call (617) 226-7183 or visit www.hfsa.org and click on Annual Scientific Meeting. There is no registration fee for accredited journalists. Interview areas will be available on-site in addition to a fully-staffed press room with phone and internet accessibility. You may follow news from the meeting on Twitter #HFSA.

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About Heart Failure

Heart failure is a progressive condition in which the heart muscle becomes weakened after it is injured, most commonly from heart attack or high blood pressure, and gradually loses its ability to pump enough blood to supply the body's needs. Many people are not aware they have heart failure because the symptoms are often mistaken for signs of getting older. Heart failure affects from 4.6 to 4.8 million individuals in the United States. Demographic and clinical evidence strongly suggests that the prevalence of heart failure will increase throughout the next decade. Ten to 15 years ago heart failure was considered a "death sentence;" however, recent advances in treatment have shown that early diagnosis and proper care in early stages of the condition are key to slowing, stopping or in some cases reversing progression, improving quality of life, and extending life expectancy. For more information on heart failure, please visit www.abouthf.org.

About the Heart Failure Society of America

The Heart Failure Society of America (HFSA) is a nonprofit educational organization, founded in 1994 as the first organized association of heart failure experts. The HFSA provides a forum for all those interested in heart function, heart failure research and patient care. The Society also serves as a resource for governmental agencies (FDA, NIH, NHLBI, CMS). The HFSA Annual Scientific Meeting is designed to highlight recent advances in the development of strategies to address the complex epidemiological, clinical and therapeutic issues of heart failure. Additional information on HFSA can be found at www.hfsa.org.