**The NEED**

When patients suffer from a gastrointestinal disorder, painful symptoms can flare at any time — making the everyday tasks of living a challenge. Because episodes often are tied to something they have eaten, individuals instinctively want dietary solutions, rather than medication, as a first-choice treatment. The need for responsible guidance from physicians on how food can help is urgent. Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), the most commonly diagnosed gastrointestinal condition, affects an estimated 15 percent of all Americans, with associated costs for care and lost productivity topping $21 billion. Millions of others suffer with severe gastrointestinal symptoms from other diseases including ulcerative colitis, Crohn's disease, celiac disease and eosinophilic esophagitis in which diet plays a critical role. What’s needed now is a new focus and scientific rigor around diet-based care and research — and the use of such knowledge as we train the next generation of physicians. The goal: pave the way toward evidence-based, life-changing nutritional solutions both for flares and to arrest and cure these diseases.

**The VISION**

The University of Michigan is leading the way in nutritional care, research and education for gastrointestinal disorders. We have established a groundbreaking program incorporating specially trained registered dietitians into our clinic, so that patients get personalized dietary help as part of the care process. And we are pursuing an array of clinical trials testing nutritional theories and treatments. We envision the establishment of a first-of-its-kind A Pioneering Nutrition Center for Digestive Diseases.
Nutrition Center for Digestive Diseases. We will capitalize on our strengths and leverage the talents and expertise of researchers throughout our medical school and university for the benefit of our patients and their families — and those around the world. At its core will be a world-class food analysis laboratory that will enable us to better understand the association between the specific contents of food and the gastrointestinal system. Within this pioneering environment, we will train a new generation of physicians, scientists and dietitians who will transform the role of diet from an afterthought to a primary treatment strategy for patients with a variety of different gastrointestinal conditions.

The OPPORTUNITY
In today’s health-conscious consumer environment, patients are increasingly turning away from medications and actively seeking information on what to eat to feel better when facing bothersome gastrointestinal symptoms. Physicians and their teams have an incredible opportunity to make an impact. Yet traditionally, primary care doctors and gastroenterologists have not been trained to confidently do so. While physicians have relied on common sense in acknowledging diet and lifestyle effects, they have had little evidence to support using specific nutritional strategies to manage their patients.

That’s changing. As we expand our scientific understanding of food, the gut microbiome, the immune system, the neuroendocrine system and other related areas, we see more clearly what is in the gastrointestinal tract and how it functions. Physicians can more fully appreciate the importance of dietary interventions. A growing body of evidence, for example, supports the use of low FODMAP, gluten-free and specific food elimination diets as therapies. Much more is on the horizon as researchers begin to cross disciplines and boundaries to look for answers.

To propel the field forward, the U-M Nutrition Center for Digestive Diseases will focus on four main missions: clinical care, research, education and healthy living. Our effort will represent one of the largest commitments to advancing nutritional therapies in the country.

In clinical care, dedicated physician champions will work with dietitians to develop specific evidence-based diet interventions for patients with a range of conditions, including functional and chronic bowel diseases, and diseases of the pancreas, liver and the esophagus.

We already are on the leading edge of research. We are conducting the first randomized clinical trial evaluating the low FODMAP diet in patients with IBS in the United States. The low FODMAP diet eliminates certain carbohydrates called fermentable oligosaccharides, disaccharides, monosaccharide and polyols that are difficult for the intestines to digest and absorb. Our development of an online platform for the diet will break new ground. We also are launching a clinical trial of dietary therapy for people with fecal incontinence and starting work to streamline and simplify the low FODMAP diet.

To realize our full potential, we will take the important step of establishing a state-of-the-art food analysis center for research and to inform clinical care. The first-of-its kind in a U.S. academic setting, the laboratory will serve as a critical, independent source of information about food content. Paired with our current studies on how dietary carbohydrates impact patients with GI disorders, it will be a powerful new tool for developing treatments and novel approaches to prevention. Peter Gibson, director of gastroenterology at the Alfred and Monash
University in Australia and an international leader in food analysis, is an advisory partner on the project.

We also will expand our research efforts by establishing a biobank of blood and tissue samples, a research kitchen, and a program to provide seed funding to researchers with innovative ideas. We will develop novel intestinal imaging techniques, such as confocal laser endomicroscopy, to better understand the effect of food on the gut. And we will strive to develop new diagnostic tests to identify food intolerances. We will leverage ongoing work with Web-based and mobile nutrition intervention platforms to transform the implementation of therapeutic diet strategies in the clinic and provide a renewable source of data to better understand how food causes GI problems. We will support statistical analysis and big data investigations, and we will fuel the work of basic and translational scientists as they strive to advance key strategic initiatives.

We will partner with the newly formed U-M Department of Nutrition to train a new generation of physicians, scientists and dietitians dedicated to this area. We will endow an annual lectureship to invite national and international innovators to campus, and we will create online and live educational programs for professionals and patients.

To encourage healthy living as an approach to gastrointestinal diseases nationwide — and to achieve the most impact from our work — we will establish a strong social networking presence and launch a suite of branded products, including educational materials for consumers, healthy food products and cooking classes.

**YOU CAN BE A VICTOR**

As we create the Nutrition Center for Digestive Diseases to integrate clinical care and training efforts and promote bench-to-bedside research, philanthropic gifts will play a critical role in what we can achieve — and how quickly we can move forward. Together, we can change the way we care for patients and improve lives.

**TO PARTNER WITH US, CONTACT:**

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