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## **Press Release**

### **Dr. Ilene Sussman to head the VHL Family Alliance International**

BOSTON, September 6, 2011. The Board of Directors is pleased to announce that Ilene Sussman, Ph.D. has been appointed as the new Executive Director for the VHL Family Alliance International, effective September 6. Von Hippel-Lindau (VHL) is a genetic cancer that causes benign and cancerous tumors in six different organ systems.

Sussman joins the VHL Family Alliance after serving as the Executive Director of the North American Thrombosis Forum (NATF) in Boston.

In Sussman's role at NATF she was responsible for expanding awareness, leading advocacy efforts on Capitol Hill, and expanding educational programs. In addition to managing the day-to-day operations, Ilene is credited with growing NATF, developing collaborative relationships, and presenting at national and international meetings.

Prior to her tenure at NATF, Ilene spent seven years working for the Boston Jewish community including positions at Combined Jewish Philanthropies and as the Founding Executive Director of DAF: Jewish Day School Advocacy Forum.

In addition to her decade-long tenure in the not-for-profit sector, Ilene utilized her biochemistry background in the pharmaceutical industry at Genzyme Corporation and Oravax as well as at Boston University Medical Center where she served as Research Assistant Professor of Medicine.

"As Joyce Graff transitions to her new role as Wellness Director, Ilene's skills and experience will be valuable to the VHL Family Alliance," said Jeanne McCoy, Board Chair. "We will look to Ilene to provide leadership and strategic direction as we aim to grow the organization, gain greater visibility, and increase our grant funding stream."

"I am delighted to welcome Ilene as our new Executive Director," said Joyce Graff who co-founded the organization in 1993 to find help for her son, is nearing retirement. "I look forward to working with her in my exciting new role as Wellness Director. With her strong leadership at the helm, I will be able to focus on improving our VHL Handbook and other publications, and working with the medical experts to strengthen the information available to doctors and patients throughout the country and the world."

Sussman earned her Ph.D. in Biochemistry from The Weizmann Institute of Science in Israel along with a MS, Biochemistry and a BA, Biology from the University of Pennsylvania.

The VHL Family Alliance International, founded in Brookline, Massachusetts in 1993, is a worldwide network of research and voluntary support groups for individuals and families affected by von Hippel-Lindau disease, their physicians and health care professionals, and the researchers studying VHL. The VHL gene is a primary player on the path of angiogenesis and



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thus is one of the keys to understanding cancer. The 10<sup>th</sup> International Medical Symposium on VHL will be held in January in Houston. See <http://vhl.org/conf2012>

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