



MOUNT SINAI  
SCHOOL OF  
MEDICINE

## GROUNDBREAKING PROGRAM LAUNCHED WHICH CREATES LINK BETWEEN HEALTH OF RURAL COMMUNITIES AND PROTECTION OF CRITICAL HABITATS

-Panthera Enlists Mount Sinai School of Medicine's Global Health and Emerging Pathogens Institute for Jaguar Conservation Project in Brazilian Pantanal Region -

**NEW YORK, NY** (April 1, 2009) - **Panthera**, the leading global foundation dedicated to assuring the future of the world's wild cats and their landscapes, announced today the launch of a cutting-edge program, in partnership with **Mount Sinai School of Medicine's Global Health and Emerging Pathogens Institute**, to advance the training of doctors in regions where their presence can enable the local population to see tangible benefits from Panthera's conservation initiatives and to advance our understanding of the critical intersection of human health and wild life conservation.

The program with Mount Sinai is currently being implemented as part of Panthera's *Pantanal Project*, a unique initiative with dual objectives: creating one of the world's largest, intact protected jaguar corridors; and establishing within the corridor a replicable model where cattle ranching is both financially profitable and compatible with jaguar conservation. The Brazilian Pantanal region, where Panthera now manages over 700 square kilometers of critical habitat dedicated to ensuring the survival of the world's largest jaguars, is also the largest cattle ranching landscape on the planet.

"Our rationale for embarking upon community outreach to improve the lives of ranching communities is a natural outgrowth of our regional agenda," said Dr. Alan Rabinowitz, Panthera's President & Chief Executive Officer. "As ranchers kill jaguars because of the threat they represent to livestock ranching, improving ranch productivity is key to reducing human-jaguar conflict. Rather than removing cattle and negatively impacting local livelihoods, we are developing proactive models to demonstrate that profitable cattle ranching and jaguar conservation go hand in hand," explained Dr. Rabinowitz.

Rabinowitz added: "Coupled with our efforts to build a school for local children and to explore the development of ecotourism, our partnership with the Mount Sinai School of Medicine is a critical link in Panthera's outreach efforts as it provides healthcare to ranchers, offers opportunities to initiate research projects that would foster human and wild-life health and allows our staff to provide the local community with tools to mitigate conflict and foster tolerance for jaguars."

"Strategically, there is a direct nexus between advancing the cause of wildlife conservation and the improvement of human welfare within the most vulnerable ecosystems," said Dr. Thomas S. Kaplan, Panthera's Founder & Chairman. "If we are to truly consolidate the gains that come from stewarding large tracts of land for the benefit of future generations, we must create the conditions for local communities to see that not only can there be co-existence between themselves and wildlife, but that their lives are improved as a result of our activities. Our program with Mount Sinai School of Medicine's Global Health and Emerging Pathogens Institute is tangible proof that all stakeholders in the future of the Pantanal can win through our efforts. If successful, it is anticipated that this program in Brazil will serve as the template for a new series of similar outreach efforts focusing on the range of big cat species in Africa, Asia as well as Latin America," concluded Dr. Kaplan.

In addition to improving living standards, Mount Sinai's Global Health and Emerging Pathogens Institute will be pursuing critical medical objectives in advancing its global clinical mission. "We are very excited about this joint venture with Panthera," said Mary E. Klotman, MD, Co-Director of Mount Sinai's Global Health and Emerging Pathogens Institute. "It is now clear to the medical community that major infectious diseases like *Ebola* and *Avian Flu* emerge in regions where a broken link in the environment has created a viral instability at the point of contact between man and his wildlife and there is a bi-directional threat of human and wild-life pathogens. A major goal of the new program is to give medical and graduate students a deeper understanding about the links between animal and human diseases so that we may recognize the earlier signs of trouble."

Adolfo Garcia-Sastre, PhD, Co-Director of the Institute and Principal Investigator of the Center for Research on Influenza Pathogenesis at Mount Sinai added "The highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza virus not only kills poultry, but also wild birds, big cats and humans. Information on the viruses circulating at the wild-life human interface is critical to protect both human and animal health. This partnership represents an emerging dogma of one health, one world."

Dr. Klotman further stated: "Our hope is that this concept will be introduced more broadly into medical education, so that it is not just high-level investigators who understand the importance ecological balance has on the health of humans."

For more information on the human health care - jaguar conservation project, please visit: [http://www.panthera.org/pantanal\\_jaguar.html](http://www.panthera.org/pantanal_jaguar.html) or <http://mssm-ghc.org/pantanalproject>.

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### **About Panthera**

Unlike any other conservation organization in the world, Panthera's sole mission is the range-wide conservation of the world's 36 species of wild cats - from the diminutive black-footed cat of southern Africa to the massive tiger of Asia. Founded in 2006, Panthera has, in a remarkably short time become an increasingly powerful force in the protection of wild felids and their landscapes, and is now the largest single funder of cat conservation globally. Panthera not only funds cat conservation initiatives, it acts as a conservation think-tank that supports innovative people, programs, and ideas across the conservation spectrum.

With offices in New York and London, Panthera emphasizes strategic partnerships and collaboration with other agencies and conservation groups, and encourages promising cat conservationists through scholarships and awards. For more information, please visit [www.panthera.org](http://www.panthera.org).

### **About Mount Sinai School of Medicine's Global Health Center**

The Global Health and Emerging Pathogens Institute at Mount Sinai School of Medicine builds on Mount Sinai's recognized long-standing expertise in basic discovery in viral pathogenesis and in its training programs for future leaders offered through the Global Health Center (GHC). The Institute has a three-part mission in research, education and clinical care focused on some of the major challenges to global health, particularly in the area of infectious diseases. The GHC provides education opportunities for students and physicians with the goal of improving health care for the underserved by training future leaders in global health. The research mission of the Institute is to translate basic discovery around our most pressing global emerging pathogens into new approaches to treatment and prevention.

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