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HealthGrades Releases Fifth Annual Women's Health in American Hospitals Study

Women Who Give Birth at Top Hospitals Have 76 Percent Fewer Complications for C-Section, 51 Percent Fewer for Vaginal Birth

New Hospital Ratings Posted to www.healthgrades.com

GOLDEN, Colo. (June 24, 2008) – Large variations among hospitals persist in the quality of maternity and cardiac care for women, according to a new study released today by HealthGrades, the leading independent healthcare ratings organization. The *Fifth Annual HealthGrades Women's Health in American Hospitals* study analyzes the quality of care at U.S. hospitals in 17 states for treatment of heart disease and stroke among women and for women giving birth, with ratings for individual hospitals posted to www.HealthGrades.com. The study also identifies those hospitals performing in the top 10 percent in the nation in the area of women's health and maternity care.

Key findings of this year's study include:

- The best-performing hospitals had almost 51 percent fewer maternal complications among women who had vaginal births compared to poor-performing hospitals.
- The best-performing hospitals had almost 76 percent fewer maternal complications among women who had C-sections compared to poor-performing hospitals.
- Overall, risk-adjusted mortality for cardiovascular disease for women improved on average almost 15 percent from 2004 through 2006.
- The best-performing hospitals had almost 40 percent lower risk-adjusted mortality for treatment of cardiovascular disease than the poor-performing hospitals and 22 percent lower risk-adjusted mortality than average-performing hospitals.

“The impact of women's health on the U.S. healthcare system is tremendous, accounting for nearly 60 percent of all hospital admissions,” said Dr. Samantha Collier, HealthGrades chief medical officer and lead study author. “It is imperative, based on the huge differences in the quality identified in our study, that women research their local hospital's clinical outcomes before choosing where to receive their care.”

As part of the study, HealthGrades analyzed more than 12.5 million hospital delivery and newborn records from 2004 through 2006 in 17 states. To assess maternity care program performance, HealthGrades studied overall maternal complications rates for vaginal, C-section, and patient-choice C-sections (non-clinically indicated C-sections) as well as neonatal mortality. The best-performing hospitals are those hospitals that have the lowest combined rates of maternal complications and weight-stratified neonatal mortality.

To determine cardiac and stroke care outcomes among women, HealthGrades analyzed more than one million hospitalizations for the same three-year period. To be included in the analysis, hospitals had to have a program to perform open heart surgery and transfer out less than 10 percent of their stroke patients.

Ratings for individual hospitals, as well as the full study, were posted today to HealthGrades' consumer Web site, www.healthgrades.com. On HealthGrades.com consumers can compare the quality of hospitals in a state or metropolitan area by procedure/diagnosis and by HealthGrades award category. Hospitals rated as five-stars perform better than expected in terms of mortality and complications, three-stars indicates performance as expected and one-star poorer than-expected.

HealthGrades Specialty Excellence Award

In the study, HealthGrades identifies hospitals with superior clinical performance in the treatment of heart disease and stroke among women and for women giving birth. HealthGrades recognizes the top 10 percent of hospitals nationwide for clinical outcomes with its Specialty Excellence Award for Maternity Care and Specialty Excellence Award for Women's Health. Patients can find these top-performing hospitals on HealthGrades' consumer Web site, www.healthgrades.com.

About HealthGrades

Health Grades, Inc. (Nasdaq: HGRD) is the leading healthcare ratings organization, providing ratings and profiles of hospitals, nursing homes and physicians. Millions of consumers and many of the nation's largest employers, health plans and hospitals rely on HealthGrades' independent ratings and decision support resources to make healthcare decisions based on the quality and cost of care. More information on the company can be found at <http://www.healthgrades.com>.

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