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2009 Lewis Blackman Award Winners Announced

*Change Is Good: South Carolina Healthcare Organizations Honor
Four Who Have Transformed Healthcare in the Palmetto State*

COLUMBIA, S.C., March 17, 2010 - - Change can be a scary thing. Changing schools or jobs, for example, intimidates many people. But in the Lewis Blackman Patient Safety Champion Awards, sponsored by the Health Sciences South Carolina, South Carolina Hospital Association (SCHA), PHT Services, Ltd., and Mothers Against Medical Errors, change is good. Today at the Third Annual South Carolina Patient Safety Symposium, four “transformers” were recognized for their efforts in making South Carolina hospitals better and safer for patients.

The Lewis Blackman Patient Safety Champion Award winners for 2010 are: Dr. Robert Adams, a neurologist at the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) and the endowed chair in the Health Sciences South Carolina-supported Stroke Center of Economic Excellence; Susan McWilliam, a nurse at Hillcrest Memorial Hospital in Simpsonville, part of the Greenville Hospital System; Jan Vick, a hairdresser from Chesterfield turned patient advocate; and Dr. Mary Jo Cagle, medical director of Bon Secours St. Francis Health System in Greenville.

The Lewis Blackman Patient Safety Champion Awards were created in 2008 to recognize individuals who have demonstrated exemplary dedication and leadership in advancing the quality and safety of healthcare for patients across South Carolina. The awards are named in honor of Lewis Blackman, a 15-year-old who died in 2000 after an elective surgical procedure due to potentially preventable medical complications.

Dr. Robert Adams is one of two Caregiver Award winners. Dr. Adams came to MUSC in 2005 as a professor in the MUSC Department of Neurosciences and the endowed chair in the Stroke Center of Economic Excellence supported by Health Sciences South Carolina. His vision was to reduce the life-changing effects of stroke by using telemedicine to connect MUSC stroke experts with South Carolina’s small and rural hospitals. He also sought to increase the safe use the “clot-busting” drug, tPA, a FDA approved but little used treatment for ischemic stroke.

In just 18 months, Dr. Adams and his team recruited nine hospitals to the REACH Stroke Network: Coastal Carolina Medical Center, Georgetown Memorial Hospital, Grand Strand Regional Medical Center, Marion County Medical Center, McLeod Health, Piedmont Medical Center, Self Regional Healthcare, Waccamaw Community Hospital, and Williamsburg Hospital. These hospitals now have 24/7 access to MUSC stroke

experts who assist local ER physicians on the diagnosis and treatment of stroke patients. As of January 2009, more than 200 stroke consults had been completed and the use of tPA to treat ischemic strokes has quadrupled in REACH Stroke Network partners.

Susan McWilliam, the second Caregiver Award recipient, is a clinical nurse educator at Hillcrest Memorial Hospital in Simpsonville. A self-proclaimed “change agent” for inpatient hospital care, McWilliam focuses her efforts on educating future nurses. She has developed curriculums that weave critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and caring throughout nursing students’ classes. She also teaches nursing students to treat every patient like a dear family member. McWilliam has worked across Hillcrest Memorial Hospital departments and across the Greenville Hospital System to ensure nurses have the knowledge, skills, and clinical support to respond to critical changes in the condition of patients.

Jan Vick, the Advocacy Award winner, lost her twin sister to a medical error death in 2004. Looking for a positive way to channel her grief, Vick took up the banner of healthcare safety, and in 2009, formalized her advocacy efforts as the founder and executive director of South Carolina Voices for Patient Safety, a nonprofit organization committed to raising awareness of patient safety in South Carolina. Vick serves as a patient advocate on the Health Sciences South Carolina’s Patient Advisory Committee, South Carolina Heart Care Quality Alliance Board, the South Carolina State Advocate Committee, and various SCHA committees.

Dr. Mary Jo Cagle, the Healthcare Executive Award winner, is the chief medical officer at Bon Secours St. Francis Health System in Greenville. When she took the job in 2005, she set about fostering a system-wide culture of patient safety. Under Dr. Cagle’s leadership, St. Francis earned the South Carolina Governor’s Award for Quality in 2008, and successfully completed the implementation of one of South Carolina’s first fully integrated electronic medical records systems in 2009, which reduced medication error rates and improved patient safety. Since 2007, St. Francis has had zero hospital-acquired central line associated blood stream infections. This was a key factor in St. Francis being honored in the March 2010 issue of Consumer Reports.

About Health Sciences South Carolina

Established in April 2004, Health Sciences South Carolina (HSSC) is a statewide public-private collaborative of research-intensive universities and major health systems possessing the shared vision of using health sciences research to improve the health, health care and economic wellbeing of South Carolina. HSSC includes Clemson University, the Medical University of South Carolina, the University of South Carolina, Greenville Hospital System University Medical Center, Palmetto Health, Spartanburg Regional Healthcare System, McLeod Health, Self Regional Healthcare and AnMed Health. For more information, visit www.healthsciencessc.org.