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Quality of South Carolina Health Care Among Most Improved in Nation

*Hospital Care and Heart Disease Care Among State's Strengths,
According to Recently Released U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services Study*

COLUMBIA, S.C., August 18, 2010 - -South Carolina is one of five states that showed the greatest improvement when it comes to health care quality, according to a new report from the research arm of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The 2009 State Snapshots report, released on July 22, 2010, is the latest annual examination of state-by-state quality data released by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. The report summarizes health care quality in three dimensions: care type (preventive, acute and chronic care), care setting (hospitals, ambulatory settings, nursing homes and home health care) and clinical condition (cancer, diabetes, heart disease, maternal and child health and respiratory disease).

"What's driving our success? In a word, collaboration," says Thornton Kirby, President and CEO of the South Carolina Hospital Association. "There's no greater example than the emergence of Health Sciences South Carolina. South Carolina is the only state in the nation that has all its major research universities and six teaching hospital systems joining forces to improve the quality of health care—and the results are beginning to show."

"That's absolutely true and we're very proud of what's being accomplished," says Dr. Jay Moskowitz, President and CEO of Health Sciences South Carolina, a public-private collaborative that is working to improve health care and health research in the state. "There's more to the story, however. South Carolina also benefits from a state hospital association that has set a new standard for work in the field of quality and safety. The entire hospital community works in partnership to seek out best practices and share them statewide, and the power of that collaborative spirit is undeniable. Working together, our goal in South Carolina is to deliver the right care to each patient, every time."

Areas in which South Carolina scored particularly high for 2009 and showed improvement over the baseline year (which varies across measures) include Hospital Care (South Carolina scored "Strong" in this category), Heart Disease Care ("Strong") and Home Healthcare ("Very Strong").

- Within the Hospital Care category, South Carolina ranked at or above the all-state average in 27 of 31 quality dimensions. This category measured dimensions such as the percentage of hospital patients who received appropriately timed antibiotics and the percentage of hospital patients with heart failure who were given complete written discharge instructions.

- Within the Heart Disease Care category, South Carolina ranked at or above the all-state average in 9 of 11 quality dimensions. This category measured dimensions such as the percentage of adults who have had their cholesterol checked during the previous five years and adult admissions for congestive heart failure per 100,000 population.
- Within the Home Healthcare category, South Carolina ranked at or above the all-state average in all 10 quality dimensions. This category measured dimensions such as the percentages of home health care patients who get better on various mobility measures (e.g., moving around, bathing and getting out of bed).

For the past three years, the South Carolina Hospital Association and Health Sciences South Carolina have joined together to make patient safety and quality health care a priority. Both CEOs attribute the state's success to their organizations' alignment and commitment to improved patient care.

Besides South Carolina, other states that showed the greatest improvement were Maine, Maryland, Wyoming and the District of Columbia. The five states showing the smallest improvement were North Dakota, Texas, West Virginia, Nebraska and Washington State.

State-level information used to create the State Snapshots is based on data collected for the 2009 National Healthcare Quality Report.

The State Snapshots are available at <http://statesnapshots.ahrq.gov/>.

About the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) is the health services research arm of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), complementing the biomedical research mission of its sister agency, the National Institutes of Health. AHRQ is a home to research centers that specialize in major areas of health care research such as quality improvement and patient safety, outcomes and effectiveness of care, clinical practice and technology assessment, and health care organization and delivery systems. It is also a major source of funding and technical assistance for health services research and research training at leading U.S. universities and other institutions, as well as a science partner, working with the public and private sectors to build the knowledge base for what works—and does not work—in health and health care and to translate this knowledge into everyday practice and policymaking. For more information, visit www.ahrq.gov.

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, Self Regional Healthcare and AnMed Health. For more information, visit www.healthsciencessc.org.

About the South Carolina Hospital Association

The South Carolina Hospital Association is a private, not-for-profit organization made up of some 100 member hospitals and health systems and about 900 personal members associated with our institutional members. The South Carolina Hospital Association was created in 1921 to serve as the collective voice of the state's hospital community. The Association is proud to be a part of the state's hospital industry, adding value to hospitals' efforts to care for the people of South Carolina. By helping to keep South Carolina's hospitals healthy, we are helping to keep our state healthy. For more information, visit www.scha.org.