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Georgia Hospital Association Consumer Web Site Focus on Price and Quality of State's Health Care

ATLANTA (Feb. 22, 2007) – “Shopping” for health care on the basis price and quality just got a little easier for Georgia health consumers with the launch of the Georgia Hospital Association’s Partnership for Health and Accountability’s (PHA) redesigned and expanded consumer health Web site, *Insights*. A first of its kind in the state, *Insights*, enables consumers to research the prices of common procedures and make hospital-to-hospital comparisons on quality of care. Former U.S. House Speaker and Center for Health Transformation Founder Newt Gingrich praised the initiative as a positive step toward creating a better, safer health system for Georgia.

“Only in a consumer-led system will we begin to solve the problems of high cost, inconsistent quality, and the rising number of uninsured,” said Gingrich. “GHA’s commitment to providing online consumer access to cost and quality information is a significant step toward creating a 21st health system for Georgia that emphasizes safety and efficiency.”

Developed in 2002, the Web-based consumer guide offers Georgians on-demand access to a host of health care resources, including comparative data on the safety and quality of hospitals around the state, pricing on common procedures and insurance information as well as tips and checklists designed to help consumers' navigate more smoothly through the health care system.

“There are numerous resources consumers can use to find information about buying cars, consumer electronics or mutual funds and they should be equally empowered when researching their hospitals and health services,” said GHA Executive Vice President Vi Naylor. “Our goal with *Insights* is not just to provide consumers with information, but to provide that information in a format they can use to be active, informed participants in their health care.”

Insights (www.gha.org/pha/Insights/2006/index.asp) is divided into two channels: *GAHospitalPriceCheck.org*, which offers pricing information on more than 500 diagnosis related groups (DRGs) and *GAHospitalQualityCheck.org*, which evaluates how effectively hospitals incorporate practices research has indicated will lead to the best outcomes.

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Because the severity of a patient's illness has an impact on their length of stay and their overall costs, consumers can select a range of illness severity levels on *GAHospitalPriceCheck.org* to gain a more accurate assessment of their costs. Severity levels range from one to four with one being a patient in generally good health and four being a patient with a severe medical condition and multiple complications.

GAHospitalQualityCheck.org enables users to select up to six hospitals at a time and evaluate how well hospitals practice what are considered the most safe and effective procedures for treating four common conditions: heart attacks, heart failure, pneumonia, and pregnancy. The data compares the hospital's current rates for these conditions to that of the previous year to gauge improvement.

Insights includes data for more than 150 acute care hospitals that voluntarily participate in the program. GHA President Joseph A. Parker said member hospitals' overwhelming support for the initiative has been critical.

"Georgia's hospitals have taken on a leadership role in responding to Governor Perdue's call for greater transparency in health care and have been working side-by-side with us to promote excellence at all levels of our health system," said Parker.

The site will be updated on a rolling quarterly basis and will also include other useful information such as whether the hospital participates in national quality and patient safety initiatives or has received such honors as the Partnership for Health and Accountability's (PHA's) Quality and Patient Award.

Naylor said hospitals benefit in several ways by sharing quality of care information on *Insights*. Participation helps hospitals highlight their successes, identify and focus on areas for improvement, as well as benchmark performance against local and national standards. Hospitals also have the opportunity to give consumers important information about quality of care to help them compare and make informed decisions.

"It's a win-win for patients and hospitals," said Naylor.

About PHA

PHA, formed in January 2000 and sponsored by the Georgia Hospital Association, is a unique statewide collaborative that brings together health care providers with community agencies and individuals to increase accountability and to achieve safer care and healthier communities. PHA includes representation from groups like hospitals, physicians, state health officials, legislators and businesses. For more information about PHA, please visit the website at: <http://www.gha.org/pha/>

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About GHA

Established in 1929, the Georgia Hospital Association (GHA) is the leading trade organization of hospitals and health systems in the state providing education, research, and risk management services to more than 180 hospital and health system members. Additionally, it represents and advocates health policy issues benefiting Georgia's citizens before the state legislature and U.S. Congress as well as before regulatory bodies. Please visit the association's Web site at <http://www.gha.org>.

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