

August 1, 2012

**Contact:**  
Brenda Williams  
[brenda.williams@tnmed.org](mailto:brenda.williams@tnmed.org)  
800-659-1862

*Photo: Dr. Cofer*

## **Dr. Joe Cofer Named TMA Public Health Champion**

(Nashville, TN) – **Joseph B. Cofer, MD, FACS, of Chattanooga**, has been named a TMA Quarterly Public Health Champion for 2012. The honor recognizes TMA member physicians for their outstanding public health contributions across the state of Tennessee.

Dr. Cofer is being recognized for his efforts to improve healthcare quality and efficiency, as well as access to care. He is a member and former president of the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Medical Society (CHCMS).

A general surgeon on staff at Erlanger Medical Center, Dr. Cofer is chairman of the Tennessee Surgical Quality Collaborative (TSQC) Leadership Committee and vice-president of the Tennessee Chapter of the American College of Surgeons. He is also chair and founder of Project Access in Chattanooga, which provides health care for the working poor.

He recently co-authored a study examining the results of Tennessee hospital participation in the TSQC and found it significantly reduced hospital complications, and saved about \$8 million over a one-year period. Tennessee is not the first state but was an early adopter of collaborative efforts to improve care and performance in hospitals; Dr. Cofer cites the partnership between the Tennessee Hospital Association, Tennessee Chapter of ACS, and BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee Health Foundation as a unique collaboration between three entities that normally have competing interests. “I don’t know any other collaboration that has that three-legged stool. We banded together to put patient outcomes and patient safety first,” he said in a recent interview about the project.

In 2007 he was awarded the TMA Distinguished Service Award for his vision and leadership in creating and directing Project Access, which has contributed nearly \$88 million in healthcare services caring for 300-400 patients a month. In addition to being a leader and organizer, Dr. Cofer is a volunteer physician in the program.

His other accomplishments include a term as president of the Association of Program Directors in Surgery. In 2006, he was named Surgeon Champion at Erlanger Medical Center for the American College of Surgeon’s (ACS) National Surgical Quality Improvement Project; was named to a three-year-term on the Information Technology Committee of the University of Tennessee Health Science Center in Memphis; and was appointed to the Editorial Board for *The American Surgeon*, official journal of the Southeastern Surgical Congress. Dr. Cofer also served on the TMA’s Interprofessional Liaison Committee from 1998-2006. He currently serves as vice-chairman of the American Board of Surgery.

Dr. Cofer received his medical degree in 1978 from the University of Tennessee Health Science Center in Memphis and practices with University Surgical Associates, PC, of Chattanooga.

###

*The Tennessee Medical Association is the state’s largest physician organization. We improve the effectiveness of doctors to protect the health interests of patients. By bringing doctors together, we are leading Tennessee to a better state of health. [www.tnmed.org](http://www.tnmed.org)*