

FOR RELEASE AFTER 12 NOON, AUGUST 3

BlueCross Grant Extends Surgical Care Improvement Effort
Collaborative Has Reduced Surgical Infections and Acute Renal Failure

CHATTANOOGA, TN, August 3, 2012--The Tennessee Center for Patient Safety (TCPS) of the Tennessee Hospital Association (THA) and the Tennessee Chapter of the American College of Surgeons (TnACS) today received a \$3,984,700 grant from the BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee Health Foundation to extend the Tennessee Surgical Quality Collaborative (TSQC) through 2014.

The new grant from BlueCross was announced today at the American College of Surgeons' (ACS) surgical healthcare quality forum in Chattanooga. Funding will be used to build on the initial success of the collaborative in implementing the ACS National Surgical Quality Improvement Program (NSQIP) in 21 hospitals across Tennessee.

The partnership initially was undertaken in 2008 to evaluate and improve surgical care delivered by general and vascular surgeons in Tennessee. Earlier this year, *The Journal of the American College of Surgeons* featured the program nationally for achieving "substantial improvements in surgical outcomes, such as reducing the rates of acute renal failure and surgical site infections."

During the initial three years of the partnership, TCPS estimates the program contributed to savings of more than \$2 million per 10,000 general and vascular surgery cases annually compared to the baseline year.

"TSQC created a true three-way quality improvement relationship with hospitals, health plans and surgeons," said Joseph B. Cofer, MD, FACS, statewide surgeon champion for the collaborative, professor and residency program director, The University of Tennessee Health Science Center-Chattanooga – Department of Surgery. "We have proven that using ACS NSQIP in a collaborative as a force multiplier can significantly improve patient care and reduce costs."

"We are grateful to the BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee Health Foundation for its continued funding of this important work," stated Scott Raynes, THA chairman and CEO, NorthCrest Medical Center, Springfield. "The collaborative has helped to align hospitals' and surgeons' efforts in quality improvement supporting the THA board of directors' commitment toward zero incidents of preventable harm in the hospitals of our state."

"Our initial grant to the Tennessee Surgical Quality Collaborative three years ago provided an outstanding return on investment for our state," explained BlueCross CEO Vicky Gregg. "NSQIP has proven to be effective in helping reduce medical errors, improve patient safety, reduce costs and deliver quality health outcomes to benefit all Tennesseans."

ABOUT THE ORGANIZATIONS AND PROGRAMS

National Surgical Quality Improvement Program (NSQIP): The Tennessee ACS chapter has encouraged adoption of the American College of Surgeons' National Surgical Quality Improvement Program (NSQIP) since its inception in 2004. NSQIP is a severity-adjusted, outcomes-based measurement tool to improve patient safety and reduce medical errors. ACS developed the NSQIP web-based database that evaluates surgical outcomes. The program is outcomes-based and risk-adjusted, which means it compensates for differences among patients, such as age and overall health status, that otherwise would affect healthcare outcomes. The system is based on the national Veterans Affairs surgical risk study that was initiated in October 1991. The VA model uses a dedicated surgical nurse to collect preoperative, intraoperative and 30-day outcome variables on more than 117,000 major operative procedures, resulting in a clinical data collection system. In the VA system, NSQIP was able to reduce operative mortality by 27 percent and postoperative morbidity by 45 percent. In addition, the median length of stay was reduced from nine days to four days.

Tennessee Center for Patient Safety (TCPS): The Tennessee Center for Patient Safety advances hospitals' adoption of proven strategies that enhance reliability, safety and quality of care received by Tennessee patients. Established in 2007, TCPS primarily is funded by the BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee Health Foundation and operated by the Tennessee Hospital Association. Priority is given to initiatives designed to measurably improve care for patients and proactively position hospitals for performance on publicly-reported national quality measures. For additional information, visit www.tnpatientsafety.com.

Tennessee Chapter of the American College of Surgeons (TnACS): TnACS represents approximately 1,650 surgeons who practice surgery in Tennessee. In addition to general surgeons, chapter members include surgeons who practice in surgical specialties, such as cardiothoracic, gynecologic, neurosurgery, ophthalmology, oral, otolaryngology, orthopedic, pediatric, plastic, thoracic, urology and vascular surgery. The purpose of the chapter is to promote the improvement of care to the surgical patient. To achieve this goal, the chapter promotes cooperation among its members in their efforts to improve the quality of care, provides a medium through which surgical experiences may be presented and discussed, and works with other organizations concerned with providing high quality healthcare in the state of Tennessee.

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Tennessee Health Foundation: BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee is the state's leading health plan, serving more than 3 million people in Tennessee and across the country. Founded in 1945, the not-for-profit Chattanooga-based company is focused on financing affordable healthcare coverage and providing peace of mind for all Tennesseans. BlueCross serves its members by delivering quality health care products, services and information. BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee Inc. is an independent licensee of the BlueCross BlueShield Association. For more information, visit the company's web site at www.bcbst.com.

American College of Surgeons: The American College of Surgeons is a scientific and educational organization of surgeons that was founded in 1913 to raise the standards of surgical practice and to improve the care of the surgical patient. The college is dedicated to the ethical and competent practice of surgery. Its achievements have significantly influenced the course of scientific surgery in America and have established it as an important advocate for all surgical patients. The college has more than 78,000 members and is the largest organization of surgeons in the world. For more information, visit www.facs.org.

Tennessee Hospital Association (THA): THA is the premiere organization in Tennessee that promotes and represents the interests of all health careers, hospitals and health systems. Established in 1938 as a not-for-profit membership association, THA serves as an advocate for hospitals, health systems and other healthcare organizations and the patients they serve. It also provides education and information for its members, and informs the public about hospitals and healthcare issues at the state and national levels. Additional information is available at www.tha.com.

Tennessee Surgical Quality Consortium Hospitals

August 2012

Baptist Hospital, Nashville: Surgeon Champion-George Lynch, MD

Baptist Memorial Hospital, Memphis: Surgeon Champion-Stephen Behrman, MD

Claiborne County Hospital, Tazewell: Surgeon Champion-Robert Wilmoth, MD

Cookeville Regional Medical Center: Surgeon Champion-Scott Copeland, MD

Cumberland Medical Center,Crossville: Surgeon Champion-Rick Gibbs, MD

Erlanger Medical Center, Chattanooga: Surgeon Champion-Joe Cofer, MD

Fort Sanders Regional Medical Center,Knoxville: Surgeon Champion-Richard Brinner, MD

Henry County Medical Center,Paris: Surgeon Champion-Ray Compton, MD

Jackson Madison County General: Surgeon Champion-Kamran Mahalati, MD

Johnson City Medical Center: Surgeon Champion-Tony Haley, MD

Maury Regional Medical Center,Columbia:Surgeon Champion-Mark Hinson, MD

Memorial Health Care System,Chattanooga; Surgeon Champion-Charles Portera, Jr., MD

Methodist University Hospital, Memphis: Surgeon Champions-Martin Fleming, MD, & Alexander Mathew, MD

NorthCrest Medical Center,Springfield: Surgeon Champion-Keith Goldberg, MD

Saint Thomas Hospital, Nashville: Surgeon Champion-Raymond Martin, III, MD

Parkwest Medical Center, Knoxville: Surgeon Champions-Christopher Pollock, MD, & Will Gibson, MD

Saint Francis Hospital, Memphis: Surgeon Champion-Norma Edwards, MD

Summit Medical Center,Nashville: Surgeon Champion-John Boskind, MD

University of Tennessee Medical Center,Knoxville: Surgeon Champions-Brian Daley, MD, and Blane Enderson, MD

Vanderbilt University Medical Center,Nashville: Surgeon Champion-Oscar Guillamondegui, MD

Wellmont Bristol Regional Medical Center:Surgeon Champion-Benjamin Scharfstein, Jr., MD