

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Georgia News

For immediate release: July 13, 2006

Media contact: Cindy Sanders, 404-842-8406, cynthia.sanders@bcbsga.com

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Georgia Congratulates Metro-Atlanta Hospitals on U.S. News & World Report's Annual List of America's Best Hospitals List includes four Georgia hospitals – all of which are in BCBSGa's network

ATLANTA– Blue Cross Blue Shield of Georgia (BCBSGa) congratulates the four Georgia hospitals honored this year by U.S. News & World Report as being among America's best hospitals in the country. All of the hospitals honored are members of BCBSGa's extensive network of health care providers in the metro-Atlanta area.

According to U.S. News & World Report, hospitals are chosen for the list based on reputation, mortality rates, and a mix of care-related factors such as quality and availability of nursing and patient services. The 50 hospitals in each specialty with the highest scores are listed. Only 176 hospitals, out of more than 5,100 medical centers in the country, made the list.

“BCBSGa is proud to have these extraordinary hospitals in our network, and we commend them for receiving such an impressive endorsement from U.S. News & World Report,” said Caz Matthews, president of BCBSGa. “Our members are fortunate to have access to the benefits of these hospitals that, according to US News & World Report, are pioneering new treatments and ensuring a higher standard of care for the rest of the world.”

The rankings of the Atlanta-based hospitals are as follows:

- Children's Healthcare of Atlanta received the 24th ranking in pediatrics
- Shepherd Center received the 12th ranking in rehabilitation
- Saint Joseph's Hospital of Atlanta received the 30th ranking in orthopedics
- Emory University Hospital received the 15th ranking in heart and heart surgery, the 15th ranking in psychiatry, the 16th ranking in ophthalmology, the 18th ranking in neurology and neurosurgery, the 25th ranking in kidney disease, the 33rd ranking in gynecology, the 36th ranking in ear, nose and throat and the 45th ranking in urology

“It is particularly gratifying to see a variety of providers – from community hospitals to academic medical centers to highly-specialized hospitals - in Metro Atlanta earn such high distinctions from this important third-party source,” said Matthews. “These hospitals demonstrate high quality initiatives and have a national reputation of being among the top providers in the country.

“We are especially excited that Saint Joseph's Hospital, along with seven other hospitals across the state, is also participating in the pilot phase of BCBSGa's provider-directed quality improvement program – Quality-In-Sights®: Hospital Incentive Program (Q-HIPSM). The program recognizes and rewards hospitals throughout the state that meet and exceed quality measures in patient safety, patient outcomes and patient satisfaction,” continued Matthews.

In addition to Saint Joseph's Hospital of Atlanta, the six other hospitals throughout Georgia participating in Q-HIP are: DeKalb Medical Center, Decatur; DeKalb Medical Center at

Hillandale; Memorial Health University Medical Center, Savannah; St. Joseph's Hospital, Savannah, Candler Hospital, Savannah, and The Medical Center, Columbus.

About Blue Cross Blue Shield of Georgia

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Georgia is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association and is an operating subsidiary of WellPoint Inc., the largest publicly traded commercial health benefits company in terms of membership in the United States. WellPoint, Inc. is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association and serves its members as the Blue Cross licensee for California; the Blue Cross and Blue Shield licensee for Colorado, Connecticut, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Maine, Missouri (excluding 30 counties in the Kansas City area), Nevada, New Hampshire, New York (as Blue Cross Blue Shield in 10 New York City metropolitan counties and as Blue Cross, Blue Shield or Blue Cross Blue shield in selected upstate counties only), Ohio, Virginia (excluding the Northern Virginia suburbs of Washington, D.C.), Wisconsin; and through UniCare. Additional information about WellPoint is available at www.wellpoint.com. Blue Cross Blue Shield of Georgia can be found on the web at www.bcbsga.com.

###