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News
For Immediate Release

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**New Internet Site Allows Consumers to Compare Quality
and Make Informed Decisions in Selecting Hospitals**

***“Choice Outcomes” Provided by CaliforniaChoice Ranks California’s Hospitals
Through a Host of Indicators Focused on Objective Data and Clinical Outcomes***

(ORANGE, CA – March 16, 2004) — Evaluating a hospital’s quality performance just became a whole lot easier thanks to a new Web site that provides California’s consumers objective information on a broad range of hospital performance indicators.

The service, called “Choice Outcomes,” is offered to the public by CaliforniaChoice, the nation’s foremost consumer-choice exchange model for small group healthcare benefits. Individuals need not be a CaliforniaChoice member to access this information.

Available on the **calchoice.com** Web site, “Choice Outcomes” allows an individual to review hospital rankings for over 160 high-risk procedures, based on a number of important criteria. These include number of patients treated, degree of favorable outcomes, average number of days spent in the hospital and mortality rate as compared to the average of area hospitals. The hospital data is drawn from the networks offered among CaliforniaChoice carriers and includes Blue Shield of California, Health Net, Kaiser Permanente, Sharp Health Plan, Universal Care/ChampionHEALTH and Western Health Advantage.

“Hospitals are required to report a wide variety of outcomes data to state offices and federal agencies,” said CaliforniaChoice President Ron Goldstein. “We are making this information available to the public as part of our long-standing belief that empowering individuals with information in an easy-to-understand manner allows them to make better healthcare decisions for themselves and their families.”

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The data presented by “Choice Outcomes” is powered by HealthShare Technology, a collection of consumer data compiled from federal and state government agencies along with The Leapfrog Group. The Leapfrog Group is a consortium of more than ninety Fortune 500 companies and purchasing coalitions working together to drive patient safety improvements in hospitals. It conducts monthly voluntary surveys among urban hospitals across the nation and works with medical experts throughout the country to identify problems and propose solutions aimed at improving hospital-based care. Representing approximately 34 million healthcare consumers in all 50 states, Leapfrog provides important information and solutions for consumers and healthcare providers.

“More than any government legislation or political intervention, providing people with the information and tools they need to make intelligent healthcare decisions is the greatest consumer protection of all,” said Goldstein. “When selecting a hospital, people have the right to know how that hospital has performed as compared to others based on an objective set of established criteria. We also believe that making this information public will serve to motivate hospitals to improve quality standards in those areas where they may be deficient. Better quality also leads to reduced costs.”

Over recent years, there has been a significant industry-wide movement towards measuring hospital performance and arriving at uniformed ways to report it and make it meaningful to the public. Such efforts are perfectly aligned with the CaliforniaChoice philosophy of empowering individuals in the healthcare decision-making process — from how much they wish to spend on healthcare to what health plan and providers best fit their family’s needs.

The CaliforniaChoice program allows small group employers to budget the fixed amount they wish to contribute toward their employees’ health benefits. CaliforniaChoice then assembles and administers – all under one umbrella – a selection of health plans and benefit options, including ancillary products such as dental, vision, chiropractic care and term life. The health plans compete for members based on benefit design, provider network, reputation and cost. Employees simply pick the plan that best matches their family’s needs and pocketbook. As business owners continue to confront double-digit increases in their health-insurance premiums, many industry observers are touting such models as the nation’s best hope for providing affordable and meaningful health insurance for its working citizens.

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CaliforniaChoice is a *CHOICE* Administrators program, the nation's leading developer and administrator of consumer-choice exchange models. Based in Orange, California, CaliforniaChoice currently delivers health coverage to over 150,000 members at more than 10,000 employer groups with 2-50 employees. In 2002, the Health Insurance Association of America honored CaliforniaChoice with its prestigious "Innovators Award," an annual recognition for a select company whose contributions have led to "true industry advancement." Further information on CaliforniaChoice may be obtained at www.calchoice.com.

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