



## News Release

For Immediate Release:  
Tuesday, December 13, 2005  
Media Contact:  
Cody Craynor  
Public Information Office  
801-538-6232

### **New Hospital Comparison Report and Web Site for Utah's Consumers**

(Salt Lake City, UT) – Utah consumers now have two new tools to help them make the right health care choices for themselves and their families. The *2005 Utah Hospital Comparison Report for Maternity and Newborns*, released today by the Utah Department of Health's (UDOH) Health Data Committee, compares Utah's hospitals in maternity care based on charges, quality and patient safety. The UDOH also launched a new consumer-friendly website, *MyHealthcare in Utah*, to assist consumers with their health care decisions. Both the report and Web site can be found at <http://health.utah.gov/myhealthcare>.

The maternity report is the first in a series designed for consumers. Utah Governor Jon M. Huntsman Jr. is quoted in the report stating: "Consumer reports, such as this one, provide Utah's residents with the knowledge they need to make informed choices about their health care."

The 2005 State Legislature unanimously passed Senate Bill 132 requiring the Health Data Committee to publish annual reports that compare hospitals based on charges, quality and patient safety. "Informed health care consumers are an essential component of our efforts to improve health care and develop healthy communities for our state," said Dr. David N. Sundwall, Executive Director, UDOH.

There are three main sections in the maternity report. The first compares average hospital charges for different kinds of maternity care. For example, the lowest average charge for a Cesarean section without complication among Wasatch Front hospitals was \$5,592, whereas the highest average charge for the same procedure was \$10,696. As noted in the report, charge is different from cost and price. Many factors can affect how much a patient pays for a delivery including insurance, the size and location of the hospital, any complications associated with the pregnancy, and whether a hospital provides care for women with high-risk pregnancies.

## **Page 2 of 2 – New Hospital Comparison Report and Web Site for Utah’s Consumers**

Data in the second section of the report show how frequently mothers in each hospital had two different types of deliveries. In 2003, 19 percent or nearly one out of every five Utah women who had a previous C-section had a vaginal birth with their next baby. This represents a significantly higher rate for Vaginal Birth After C-section (VBAC) in Utah than in the rest of the U.S. where the rate is 14 percent.

In the third section, readers can examine patient safety ratings for childbirth outcomes. A majority of Utah hospitals are rated at or above state average in providing safe care when performing maternity procedures. Utah rates for birth (baby) and obstetric (mother) injuries were similar to national averages in 2003.

In 2006, the Committee plans to release four more hospital comparative reports, which will address areas such as heart conditions and common elective surgeries based on the statewide hospital inpatient discharge data. “We encourage Utahns to use this information to ask questions of your provider, hospital or insurance representative,” said Clark Hinckley, Chairman of the Health Data Committee.

The UDOH has also launched a new consumer Web site called *MyHealthCare in Utah*. The Web site is clearinghouse for healthcare information that can help Utahns decide which hospital is best for them, how charges differ in Utah’s hospitals and where to find a hospital in their area. Also provided on the site are helpful suggestions on safer health care, costs of health insurance, how to find the best long-term care facility and links to state and national health care Web sites.

Carolyn M. Clancy, M.D., Director of the federal Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), saluted Utah’s efforts. “AHRQ views public reporting as one important strategy to advance the quality improvement agenda in health care,” Dr. Clancy said. “Evidence shows that publicly reporting performance by specific hospitals is a key element that promotes enhanced patient care.”

# # #

*The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public’s health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.*