



## News Release

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Media Contact:  
Mike Martin  
801-538-9205

### **Hips and Knees Are the Focus in Newest Hospital Comparison Report** *Public can view hospital performance across Utah*

(Salt Lake City, UT) – The number of people treated annually for hip fracture and hip or knee replacement in Utah hospitals would nearly fill the City of North Salt Lake. Hip and knee problems are not only common, they often rob people of their independence. To help inform Utahns of their medical choices, the *Utah Hospital Comparison Report on Hip and Knee Surgeries and Conditions for Years 2002-2004*, was released today by the Utah Department of Health's (UDOH) Health Data Committee.

"Utah has a long and proud tradition of keeping accurate health related data. These hospital comparative reports on outcomes of specific procedures are meant to help patients guide their care and be aware of certain quality measures," said Dr. David N. Sundwall, executive director, UDOH. "The hip and knee report is the third in a series specifically designed for consumers."

The Report compares Utah's hospitals in hip and knee joint replacement and hip fracture treatment based on charges, quality and patient safety. Readers can make comparisons of hospital performance factors such as in-hospital mortality, average charges, length-of-stay and how frequently each hospital performs selected hip and knee procedures. A copy of the report can be found at <http://health.utah.gov/myhealthcare>.

Data in the first section examines average hospital charges for different kinds of hip and knee surgeries in 2004. For example, the lowest average charge for treating patients having knee joint replacement with minor or moderate illness among Utah hospitals was \$17,252, whereas the highest average charge for the same procedure was \$44,365. Many factors can affect how much a patient pays for treatment including whether you have health insurance, what type of insurance, billing procedures at the hospital and how ill you are.

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In the second section, readers can compare quality and safety ratings for common hip and knee procedures. For example, in 2002-2004, all Utah hospitals had about as many in-hospital deaths as other U.S. hospitals for hip fracture for the kind of patients they treated. Most, but not all, Utah hospitals performed as well as other U.S. hospitals in treating hip joint replacement patients. Hospitals that treated less than 30 patients for these procedures and conditions did not receive a rating in the report.

Readers of the report can also access consumer-friendly documents about hip and knee procedures and an interactive map of hospitals in Utah. A new online format has been developed to help consumers read and understand the report's content. "Our consumer reports can help you make better choices about the health care you receive before selecting a hospital or when evaluating a current provider," said Clark Hinckley, Chairman of the Health Data Committee.

Consumer feedback verifies the importance of these hospital comparison reports among Utah's citizens. In the past few months, individual consumers have mentioned that "we've needed these reports for a long time" and "now we are more empowered and have tools to compare." One Utah consumer noted: "This will help us to ask questions when we see our doctor."

The 2005 State Legislature unanimously passed Senate Bill 132 requiring the Health Data Committee to publish annual reports that compare hospitals in the areas of charges, quality and patient safety. Before end of 2006, the Committee plans to release one more new hospital comparative report, which will address pneumonia hospitalization, and an updated maternity and newborn report.

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*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.*