

For Immediate Release

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Virginia Hospitals Improve Heart Care—Death & Readmission Rates Decline

Richmond, Virginia—Virginia hospitals reduced overall death rates of patients hospitalized for medical and surgical heart (cardiac) care. Hospital readmission rates for heart patients also dropped. Heart care is the number one reason for hospital admissions in Virginia, and heart disease is a leading cause of death. Virginia Health Information (VHI) released its annual Cardiac Care Report—a free, searchable, online tool at www.vhi.org—with quality comparisons among all Virginia hospitals on common heart health care conditions and procedures.

“Most of us know someone with heart disease and want timely information on how to avoid it, treat it and how hospitals compare” says Michael Lundberg, VHI Executive Director.

Consumers can see three years of mortality and readmission rates for each of the 86 Virginia hospitals. Reports are divided into three categories:

♥ **Medical Cardiology:** Non-surgical therapy for heart disease such as angina, congestive heart failure and acute myocardial infarction (AMI)

♥ **Invasive Cardiology:** Surgeries include cardiac catheterization, cardiac pacemaker insertion, balloon angioplasty and placement of cardiac stents and

♥ **Open Heart Surgery:** Coronary artery bypass graft (CABG) surgery and cardiac valve operations

Statewide Summaries provide detail on heart care by age, race and gender.

National studies report that hospitals performing more surgeries may experience higher quality outcomes especially when employing newer techniques. Hospitals do vary in their mortality and readmission rates, as well as hospital-specific variation from one year to the next.

VHI's report takes into account hospitals caring for sicker patients more likely to die or be readmitted. Ramesh K. Shukla, Ph.D. led development of a scientific methodology to fairly compare hospitals while a Professor at VCU's Department of Health Administration.

Visitors can also find physicians by city or county treating heart patients. The report includes physician names, contact information, hospital affiliation, foreign languages spoken and education.

“Like many health care conditions, our interest in heart disease or surgery grows when it affects us,” adds Michael Lundberg, VHI's Executive Director. VHI includes details on heart surgery, diagnostic tests and heart disease as provided by the American Heart Association, Mayo Clinic and Medline Plus. The American Heart Association's Michelle Nostheide agrees, “As the leading killer of men and women in Virginia, it is important for all consumers to educate themselves on heart disease and its treatment, and to have a plan of how and where they will seek care should an emergency happen to them.”

Virginia Health Information (VHI) is the nonprofit organization that businesses, consumers, the Commonwealth of Virginia and health insurance companies come to for health information. For those without Internet access call 1-877-VHI-INFO to receive information by mail. VHI publishes reports and consumer guides on health insurance, hospitals, HMOs, nursing facilities, physicians and other topics at www.vhi.org.

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