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Center for Health Care Solutions at Virginia Mason Launched Employers, Health Plans, Care Providers Work Together to Improve Efficiency and Patient Care Delivery

SEATTLE, Wash. – (Sept. 20, 2007) – Health care has become unaffordable for many Americans. Half of personal bankruptcy is related to the cost of health care. Each year fewer workers receive health care benefits from their employer. The federal government's hospital fund is projected to go broke in 2019. And paying higher prices does not buy better care for Americans.

To address these issues, Virginia Mason Medical Center has launched the Center for Health Care Solutions at Virginia Mason. The work of the Center for Health Care Solutions is to improve quality and access to care while reducing cost for employers and health plans for the most common and costly medical conditions.

Since 2002, Virginia Mason had been successfully applying the methods of the Toyota Production System to the delivery of health care. In 2004, Virginia Mason took the opportunity to bring the successes of waste reduction and efficiency to Puget Sound employers. An early project looked at the high cost of treating back pain. Working with a health plan and local employer, Virginia Mason providers created a new model for care of back pain. Within three months the team was able to provide same-day appointments, enhanced quality and reliability at a reduced cost.

Building on the success of this pilot project, Virginia Mason created the Center for Health Care Solutions and has begun partnering with other Northwest employers and major health plans. The Center for Health Care Solution's goal for each employer is to understand and improve the quality of care and affordability of their most costly medical conditions. In October, Virginia Mason will host a meeting with executives from 20 of the largest Puget Sound companies to demonstrate how the medical center can provide health care for employees that is not only better and more timely but also more affordable.

Robert Mecklenburg, MD, is the medical director of the new program. Darlene Corkrum, chief marketing officer, co-leads the Center for Health Care Solutions at Virginia Mason and leads the employer outreach.

"From my perspective, we all have a common purpose and that is to return healthy and satisfied employees to work faster and more affordably," said Dr. Mecklenburg.

Virginia Mason Medical Center

Virginia Mason Medical Center, founded in 1920, is a non-profit comprehensive regional health care system that combines a primary and specialty care group practice of more than 400 physicians with a 336-bed acute care hospital in Seattle. In addition, Virginia Mason has a network of clinics located throughout the Puget Sound area, and manages Bailey-Boushay House, a nursing residence and adult day health program for people living with HIV and AIDS. Virginia Mason also has an internationally recognized research center, Benaroya Research Institute at Virginia Mason. For more information, please visit VirginiaMason.org.

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