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Breast Cancer Screening for LSU Uninsured Among the Nation's Best

A Commitment to Preventative Care and Disparity Reduction

Baton Rouge (October 24, 2008) -- The U.S. Surgeon General and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services set a goal of 70% of eligible women receiving a mammogram at least every two years in Healthy People 2010, a national health promotion and disease prevention initiative.

This has been an especially difficult goal for patients who have no insurance coverage. Nationally, women without coverage get mammograms at a rate of 33% every two years. In the LSU Health System - Health Care Services Division (HCS D), 72% of patients who are without coverage and classified as free care receive mammograms every two years.

This rate is more than double the national rate for the uninsured. These patients have been a focus for HCS D because they have fewer options for obtaining screening. This disparity in care for patients without coverage and access must be addressed if we are to achieve optimal health outcomes in vulnerable populations.

This 72% rate for the uninsured ranks among the nation's best and illustrates the tremendous commitment HCS D has made to preventative care and to an ongoing effort to enhance screening efforts.

"Routine breast cancer screening is essential for early detection," said Dr. Michael K. Butler, acting HCS D CEO. "Screening is always available at any LSU Health System - HCS D hospital, regardless of the patient's ability to pay."

HCS D has reached this milestone for these vulnerable women with a variety of mechanisms, including evidence-based provider guidelines, patient self-referrals, same-day mammography availability, technology upgrades, partnering with other community providers, flexible staffing schedules, and a staff commitment to quality health care. The LSU Health System - HCS D performs over 25,000 mammograms yearly.

October is breast cancer awareness month. Over 175,000 new breast cancer cases will be newly diagnosed in 2008 in the United States, where over 2 million women are already living with breast cancer. It is the second leading cause of cancer deaths in women, but early detection and treatment can save lives and preserve health.

The LSU Health System - Health Care Services Division is one of the largest public health care delivery systems in the country. It has over 31,000 admissions, 180,000 patient days, 981,000 outpatient visits, and over 270,000 emergency department visits. Each year 1100 residents and fellows from the LSU and Tulane Schools of Medicine and Ochsner Health System and 2,200 nurses and allied health students from many colleges and universities are trained in LSU facilities.

LSU is the largest single provider of uncompensated inpatient care in Louisiana. LSU HCSD hospitals have an economic impact of over \$1.4 billion in asset business activity, \$568 million in personal earnings, and generate over 12,000 jobs.

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