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## Press Release

For Immediate Use  
October 18, 2005

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### **Ranked #7 in California for Stroke Services**

*St. Mary Medical Center is Recognized for Stroke Treatment*

**LONG BEACH, CA** – St. Mary Medical Center is now ranked #7 in the State and #1 in the Long Beach/Los Angeles Area for stroke services according to Health Grades. <sup>1</sup>

St. Mary Medical Center in Long Beach was recently rated five stars for having one of the nation's best stroke care programs. "Five Stars" were received by hospitals when the risk-adjusted mortality rates<sup>2</sup> in a particular specialty were low enough to place them in the top 10-15% of hospitals in the nation. St. Mary's mortality was significantly lower than the national average in stroke care, placing them among the top five percent of hospitals nationally.

St. Mary Medical Center is doing something right when it comes to its stroke practice that sets it apart from other hospitals. Barry Heller, Vice President of Medical Affairs at St. Mary states, "The key to a successful stroke unit is the development of a cohesive partnership between departments in the hospital. The first line of treatment for stroke happens in the emergency department. The doctors in emergency at St. Mary excel at working with neurology to quickly identify the type of stroke and begin proper treatment immediately." But good stroke care doesn't end in the emergency room.

For most stroke patients, their initial hospital visit is only the beginning of their stroke care. The stroke unit at St. Mary includes a panel of specialists including critical care, neurology, cardiology, surgery and rehabilitation. William Hornstein, M.D., Head of Neurology emphasizes, "A focused interaction between specialists is imperative, since so many different issues arise with stroke. If political issues interfere or if the hospital just doesn't coordinate efficiently, you lose time. For stroke patients, time is something that cannot be spared."

Stephen Shea, M.D., is Emergency Department Medical Director at St. Mary. "I see stroke patients when they first come through the hospital doors, and it's my job to quickly

assess whether the patient actually is having a stroke and then follow the appropriate protocols.” Patients will either be given treatment immediately or admitted for further testing, depending on the outcome of this initial assessment.

“When a patient enters the ER with stroke symptoms, neurology is called immediately to manage administration of acute treatments and to facilitate admission and order further testing,” explains Dr. Hornstein. “We work closely with cardiology and surgery, since stroke is a form of vascular disease and often may require surgery to remove a blockage. Heart attack and stroke are frequently seen together, so both specialties really play an important role in the evaluation of every stroke patient.”

Because stroke can be quite debilitating, rehabilitation plays an important role in the recovery of many stroke patients. “Rehabilitation is usually present in a patient’s care regimen from the beginning of their stay here at St. Mary,” notes Hubert Gulak, M.D., Medical Director for Rehabilitation Services. “It is important for us to understand a patient’s case and treatment thoroughly in order to prescribe and execute the most beneficial rehabilitation plan possible.”

St. Mary received the five-star rating out of nearly 5,000 hospitals reviewed nationally. The analysis includes the most recent three-year data available. The current study considers the years 2002 to 2004.

<sup>1</sup> HealthGrades, Inc. is an independent healthcare information and advisory services company that works to provide accurate and objective comparison ratings of healthcare providers and hospitals, based solely on the quality of clinical outcomes. 2005 marks the first year that the HealthGrades Specialty Excellence Awards™ were awarded, and St. Mary is the only hospital in Long Beach to receive the highest possible five-star ratings for stroke treatment.

<sup>2</sup> Risk-adjusted mortality rate is the actual number of mortalities through the three year period analyzed, 2002-2004.