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**THE LEAPFROG GROUP EXPANDS PATIENT SAFETY IMPROVEMENT
INITIATIVE INTO 12 NEW REGIONS**

*Regions to Encourage Hospitals to Report on Three Safety Practices Proven to Save Lives and
Reduce Preventable Medical Mistakes*

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) –Tens of thousands of Americans die and many more are injured each year from preventable medical mistakes made in hospitals, according to the Institute of Medicine. In addition, nearly one million medication errors occur in hospitals each year. In response, The Leapfrog Group today announced 12 new regions that will undertake efforts to reduce preventable medical mistakes by encouraging urban hospitals to adopt the Group’s patient safety standards. This effort will give consumers critical information to make more informed hospital choices.

“As a major health care purchaser for more than 800,000 people, we have a responsibility to provide our employees with safe health care, but we cannot improve patient safety on our own,” said Greg Marchand, senior manager, Health and Welfare Operations, The Boeing Company, a participant in the Leapfrog initiative. “We need the continued help and support of strong leaders in our health care community, and consumers need information to help them make informed decisions about where to seek care.”

The Leapfrog Group supports the adoption of three proven standards to prevent medical mistakes in hospitals:

- Use of computerized prescription systems (computer physician order entry - CPOE);
- Selection of hospitals with the best results or extensive experience for select high-risk conditions and procedures (evidence-based hospital referral); and
- Staffing Intensive Care Units (ICUs) with specialists trained in critical care.

The Leapfrog Group rolled out its initiatives last year in Atlanta, California, Michigan, Minnesota, East Tennessee, Seattle, and St. Louis. The 12 new regions include Colorado; Central Florida; Dallas-Forth Worth, Texas; Kansas City, Mo.; Massachusetts; Memphis, Tenn.; Metro New York; New Jersey; Rochester, N.Y.; Savannah, GA; Wichita, Kan.; and south central Wisconsin. Leapfrog’s effort now has the potential to reach about 40 percent of consumers in the U.S. in 19 regions, with critical information to make more informed hospital choices.

Companies and organizations in these regions will build community-wide collaboration among public and private health care purchasers, hospitals, health plans, physicians, unions, consumer groups and others to reduce the number of patients harmed or killed by preventable medical errors. The initial activities will be to urge urban, acute care hospitals to voluntarily fill out an online survey to share their progress toward implementing three proven patient practices.

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They also will work to recognize and reward hospitals that implement these practices. And, they will educate and inform employees, retirees and their families about preventable medical mistakes and the importance of Leapfrog's recommended hospital patient safety practices.

Research conducted by John D. Birkmeyer, M.D., Dartmouth Medical School, indicates that these three improvements could save up to 58,300 lives per year, and prevent 522,000 medication errors, if implemented by all non-rural hospitals in the United States. Nationwide this translates to nearly 60,000 lives saved and more than 500,000 serious medication errors prevented each year.

"These regions are helping set the pace for the nation," said Suzanne Delbanco, Ph.D., executive director of The Leapfrog Group. "By prompting patients to consider three proven safety practices when choosing a hospital, and encouraging local health care providers to adopt them, purchasers can help protect thousands of Americans from disability and death."

The Leapfrog practices are on the cutting edge of quality improvement, and very few hospitals have implemented all of them to date. Leapfrog chose these practices not only because of their great potential to reduce preventable medical mistakes, but also because they are easily understood by consumers and feasible to implement in the near future. Many hospitals also are implementing other practices to improve safety. These three targeted practices are part of a larger patient safety strategy hospitals might employ, and do not assure patient outcomes.

Survey information is available to consumers online at www.leapfroggroup.org. Information is updated on a monthly basis. New regions will be inviting hospitals to complete the survey as early as this spring. Leapfrog corporations and organizations also are making survey information available to employees through corporate Web sites and employee health care benefits. In addition, many health plans and the following Web-based vendors will also be disseminating the data: doctorquality.com; subimo.com; selectqualitycare.com; healthgrades.com; and healthscope.org (for California only), developed by the Pacific Business Group on Health.

The Leapfrog Group was founded in November 2000 by the Business Roundtable and has support from the National Health Care Purchasing Institute. More than 100 Fortune 500 corporations and other large private and public sector health benefits purchasers have joined the Leapfrog Group initiative, representing more than 31 million enrollees.

Partnering in this effort are The MEDSTAT Group and HealthGrades. The MEDSTAT Group (www.medstat.com) is providing data collection, analysis and support services for this effort. This includes designing and developing the online hospital survey, fielding the survey via the Web and reporting the results to The Leapfrog Group. HealthGrades is Leapfrog's technology partner providing data analysis and a consumer ratings system of the results. HealthGrades also will display the data on its own Web site (www.healthgrades.com).

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