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**UPMC HEALTH PLAN RECOGNIZED BY  
NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE FOR  
INNOVATIVE PROGRAM TO REDUCE HEALTH CARE DISPARITIES**

*Program focuses on improving maternal outcomes in urban setting*

PITTSBURGH (November 13, 2007) – UPMC Health Plan has been awarded the prestigious “Recognizing Innovation in Multicultural Health Care Award” by the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) for its efforts to reach across cultural divides and provide health plan members in Western Pennsylvania with culturally and linguistically appropriate health care services.

“UPMC Health Plan has created an innovative program that health plans nationwide should use as a model for bridging language and cultural gaps that so easily get in the way of quality health care,” said Margaret E. O’Kane, president of NCQA.

“Creating a patient-centered, multicultural health care system must be among the highest priorities of providers and health plans alike.”

UPMC Health Plan used 2004 claims data to identify disparities in maternity care among Medicaid members. It was determined that Braddock, an area outside Pittsburgh, had a high prevalence of poor birth outcomes among African American women. UPMC Health Plan developed a program to address this issue by partnering with providers and the community to identify innovative methods to improve birth outcomes for pregnant women in this area.

First trimester enrollment in the maternity program more than doubled, from 15.2% to 42.2%, and low-birthweight babies decreased from 11.2% in 2005 to 8.2% in 2006. Additionally, none of the 28 women who gave birth since Doulas were introduced in 2006 experienced a preterm delivery.

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“Poor birth outcomes are a big health concern in low-income areas, where there is significant disparity in health care access as well as outcomes for racial and ethnic minorities,” said Diane P. Holder, president of UPMC Health Plan. “UPMC Health Plan is pleased to be recognized for our work in developing and implementing a non-traditional mechanism to deliver education and support to vulnerable populations.”

According to the landmark 2002 Institute of Medicine study, “Unequal Treatment: Confronting Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care,” minorities in the U.S. tend to get lower quality health care than whites, even when such factors as medical conditions, insurance, and economic status are equivalent.

UPMC Health Plan receives its award in Washington, D.C., on November 13 during the second annual “Breakthroughs in Reducing Health Care Disparities.” The award arose from projects conducted by NCQA— with major funding from The California Endowment and support from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services — to investigate the feasibility for health plans to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate care and to monitor health care disparities using clinical quality data.

For information about the other health plans recognized in 2007 by NCQA, as well as the conferences on multicultural health care, visit [www.ncqa.org](http://www.ncqa.org)

#### **About UPMC Health Plan**

UPMC Health Plan, the second-largest health insurer in Western Pennsylvania, is owned by the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC), one of the nation's top-ranked health systems. The integrated partner companies of the UPMC Insurance Services Division – which includes UPMC Health Plan, Work Partners, EAP Solutions, UPMC *for You* (Medical Assistance), and Community Care Behavioral Health – offer a full range of group health insurance, Medicare, CHIP, Medical Assistance, behavioral health, employee assistance, and workers' compensation products and services to nearly 1 million members. Our local provider network includes UPMC as well as community providers, totaling more than 80 hospitals and more than 7,500 physicians in a 29-county region. For more information, visit [www.upmchealthplan.com](http://www.upmchealthplan.com).

**NCQA** is a private, non-profit organization dedicated to improving health care quality. NCQA accredits and certifies a wide range of health care organizations and recognizes physicians in key clinical areas. NCQA's Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set (HEDIS) is the most widely used performance measurement tool in health care. NCQA is committed to providing health care quality information through the Web, media and data licensing agreements in order to help consumers, employers and others make more informed health care choices. For more information, visit [www.ncqa.org](http://www.ncqa.org).

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**The California Endowment**, a private, statewide health foundation, was established in 1996 to expand access to affordable, quality health care for underserved individuals and communities, and to promote fundamental improvements in the health status of all Californians. For more information, visit [www.calendow.org](http://www.calendow.org).

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