

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**  
Thursday, February 1, 2007

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## **Northeast Ohio Shares in \$14 Million Award to Improve Care for the Chronically Ill**

(Cleveland, Ohio) – The MetroHealth System, along with partner organizations throughout Northeast Ohio, has been awarded \$600,000 as part of a national program to improve the quality of health care for people with chronic health conditions. The grant was awarded to MetroHealth by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) through its national initiative, *Aligning Forces for Quality: The Regional Market Project*. RWJF is the nation’s largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to improving health and health care for all Americans.

*Aligning Forces for Quality* is part of RWJF’s work to ensure that all Americans receive high-quality health care. Americans get half of the care recommended for their chronic conditions, such as diabetes and heart disease, according to studies RWJF has commissioned. And according to other research, better outpatient care for persons with chronic conditions not only improves their health, but also reduces the chances that they will be hospitalized or suffer the complications of their conditions.

“RWJF truly wants to align forces – to get physicians, payers, health plans, and public health programs all on the same page – to recognize that prevention and effective outpatient care leads to a healthier and more productive community”, said Randall Cebul, M.D., director, the Center for Health Care Research and Policy at MetroHealth and the Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine. “The groundswell of community support for our application was truly remarkable. I was inspired by support from my physician colleagues, and the proposal coincided with exciting public health initiatives under way in both the city and county.”

Partnering with MetroHealth in the three-year, \$14 million national program are Northeast Ohio’s Center for Community Solutions – the project’s umbrella organization – and the Health Action Council. Altogether, the NEO project represents more than 20 stakeholder organizations in virtually all areas of health and health care – including 53 primary care group practices and almost half of the 1,183 internists, family physicians, and pediatricians in Northeast Ohio. The coalition will utilize the funding to measure and publicly report on the care being provided to those in the community with chronic conditions, and to engage the public to become more informed about these conditions and how to receive better care. (See attached list of all participating organizations.)

"This region-wide collaborative coincides with actions employers are already taking to use their health care dollars wisely and could be a regional model for health care reform", said Barbara Belovich, executive director of the Health Action Council. "It has long been acknowledged that, if you provide better primary care to patients with chronic illness, then they're less likely to require expensive hospitalizations or surgeries. The bottom line is - better quality care means better long-term health and lower costs."

"This unique project has the potential to improve community health and reduce health care expenditures - two keys to economic development in Greater Cleveland," said George Weiner, Treuhaft chair for Health Planning and Research at The Center for Community Solutions. "We're delighted to provide the community with valuable health care information, as well as listen to the community and to bring the views of its many constituencies to bear on the project's direction."

MetroHealth attributes receipt of the coveted award in part to the widespread use of electronic medical records (EMR) throughout the region, coinciding with recognition given to Cleveland's designation by the Intel Corporation as one of three "digital cities" worldwide. In 2000, MetroHealth adopted a system-wide EMR system, allowing the sharing of patient medical data across its 10 community outpatient health centers, and enabling use of the system to better care for groups of patients with common chronic conditions. In 2004, MetroHealth partnered with The Cleveland Clinic - which uses the same EMR system - to undertake the largest diabetes management trial on record, involving 20,000 patients, 24 medical practices, and nearly 200 physicians in Northeast Ohio. In 2005, a \$10 million grant from the Saint Luke's Foundation of Cleveland, Ohio, funded development of MetroHealth's chronic disease management program, which uses the EMR system as an important catalyst to provide better care for patients with diabetes, asthma, and high blood pressure.

MetroHealth and its partner organizations join 13 other communities receiving *Aligning Forces for Quality* grants. Also participating in the multi-million dollar program are: Buffalo, Cincinnati, Detroit, Grand Rapids, Humboldt (Calif.), Kansas City, Madison, the state of Maine, Memphis, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Portland (Ore.), Seattle and York (Pa.).

The MetroHealth System ([www.metrohealth.org](http://www.metrohealth.org)), founded in 1837, is a public safety net and teaching hospital affiliated with Case Western Reserve University. MetroHealth commits to leadership in providing outstanding health care for individuals and in promoting the health of the community. MetroHealth is committed to excellence in patient care, supported by superior medical education and research, and holds a core value of providing high quality health care regardless of ability to pay.

The Center for Community Solutions ([www.communitysolutions.com](http://www.communitysolutions.com)), founded in 1913, helps policymakers, community leaders, and service providers to identify the health, social, and economic challenges facing Greater Cleveland, and to target resources toward sound, cost-effective solutions through research, analysis, communication, and organization of community resources for action. Community Solutions is guided by a 25-member Board

of Directors whose committees oversee staff teams, each working on a targeted issue or core competency of research, advocacy, or communication.

The Health Action Council (HAC) ([www.healthactioncouncil.org](http://www.healthactioncouncil.org)), a nonprofit corporation founded in 1983, serves as the voice of Ohio employers on various health care issues. Comprised of more than 100 of the state's most prominent employers and led by a 12-member Board of Directors, HAC works to improve patient safety and health care quality, extend group purchasing power, broaden educational offerings, and strengthen the network of employees and advisors.

The Northeast Ohio *Aligning Forces for Quality* collaborative consists of the following partner organizations:

- The Center for Community Solutions
- The MetroHealth System
- Health Action Council and its sponsor Health Plans
- The Cleveland Clinic Foundation
- University Hospitals Department of Family Practice
- Kaiser Permanente of Ohio
- The Louis Stokes VA Medical Center
- NorthEast Ohio Neighborhood Health Services
- Care Alliance
- Neighborhood Family Practice
- Case Western Reserve University Practice Based Research Network
- NetWellness
- OneCommunity
- Cleveland Department of Public Health
- Cuyahoga County Department of Health
- Ohio Department of Health
- NEO Regional Health Information Organization
- Ohio Department of Job and Family Services/Medicaid
- Cleveland State University