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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Hill Physicians Increases Size of Blue & Gold Network for UC Employees
Expansion Works Around Many Sutter Hospitals

SAN RAMON, CA (November 9, 2010) -- Hill Physicians Medical Group announced that more of its East Bay doctors will begin participating in the Health Net Blue & Gold HMO plan for employees of the University of California. This makes all Hill Physicians' primary care doctors in Oakland, Berkeley and throughout the East Bay available to UC employees, enabling them to move into the value-priced Blue & Gold plan while keeping their Hill Physicians primary care doctor.

Health Net's Blue & Gold plan is a new, statewide health insurance option created exclusively for University of California employees, non-Medicare retirees and their covered family members. All Hill's doctors in its San Francisco, Sacramento and Solano regions are participating in the Blue & Gold plan, as are many doctors from its San Joaquin region.

"We're delighted that so many UC employees are now able to combine the value of a competitively-priced HMO plan with the quality and choice of Hill Physicians," said Steve McDermott, CEO of Hill Physicians. "Almost all Hill members who work at UC can now switch from their current Health Net plan into the Blue & Gold plan while staying with the Hill Physicians primary care doctor they already know. And new enrollees now have more choice, making the plan even more attractive."

The Blue & Gold network comes with the same benefit coverage as the regular Health Net HMO Plan, but care is provided through a customized network of doctors and hospitals that have met both quality and cost criteria. Health Net and the University of California developed the Blue & Gold HMO plan as part of an overall strategy to minimize premium increases for the 2011 benefits year. The regular Health Net HMO plan and other plans remain available, allowing current and new enrollees to choose which option best meets their needs.

The Blue & Gold network excludes most Sutter Health hospitals, including Alta Bates Summit Medical Center in the East Bay, and some specialists that practice only at Sutter facilities. Blue & Gold enrollees who need hospitalization for non-emergency care can receive it at other East Bay hospitals such as John Muir Medical Center, St. Rose Hospital, Doctors Medical Center and others.

Although some Blue & Gold enrollees will have primary care doctors near Sutter facilities, the use of other hospitals is not a logistical obstacle. Primary care doctors can refer to a variety of specialists, most of whom have privileges at several hospitals or ambulatory surgical centers. And since the late 1990s, hospital-based doctors called hospitalists have routinely supervised on-site patient care in coordination with the patient's community-based doctor.



“The most common healthcare visit occurs in a doctor’s office,” said McDermott. “So, we are able to offer a wide choice of primary care doctors, as well as the security of high-quality hospitals through our coordinated care approach. If you need to be hospitalized, your doctor remains actively involved in your care, regardless of the hospital used. And we have exceptional hospital partners in every region.”

As the largest medical group in Northern California, Hill Physicians offers a network of more than 3,500 independent physicians, agreements with more than three dozen hospitals and a service area that includes 10 counties. Over the last few years, Hill Physicians has invested heavily in electronic health records, online lab processing and e-communications, and automated authorizations for its practices and members. Last year in Sacramento, Hill Physicians, in cooperation with Blue Shield of California and CHW’s Mercy hospitals, organized a virtual Accountable Care Organization (ACO, to care for more than 41,000 employees and retirees of CalPERS, the California Public Employees’ Retirement System. Earlier this year, Hill Physicians won the highest designation possible – Elite status – from the California Association of Physician Groups and several “Top Performer” awards from the Integrated Healthcare Association. “We’re well positioned to meet the needs of our members,” McDermott said.

All Hill Physicians’ providers continue to participate in Health Net’s standard HMO plan, and Hill Physicians doctors in Sacramento are available through Western Health Advantage. The University of California’s open enrollment period runs through November 23. An updated provider list is available from Health Net, the University of California Human Resources and Benefits Department and at www.HillPhysicians.com/UC.

About Hill Physicians Medical Group

Hill Physicians Medical Group is the largest independent physician association in Northern California and a recognized leader in innovative healthcare. The Integrated Healthcare Association and California Association of Physician Groups have recognized Hill Physicians as one of the top-performing medical groups in the state. Committed to serving healthy lifestyles, Hill Physicians Medical Group offers extensive health education services to its patients, including wellness classes, health screenings, and self-help through its online information portal at www.HillPhysicians.com.